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GUARDS
HUSSARS AND INFANTRY.

ADVENTURES OF
HARRY AUSTIN.

BY
AN OFFICER.

"Then wild as cloud, or stream, or gale,
Flow on, flow unconfined, my Tale!"
MARMION. e

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON
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RICHARDS

OCT 12 1951

TO

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL

THE RIGHT HON.

SIR RICHARD HUSSEY VIVIAN, BART.

COLONEL OF THE ROYAL DRAGOONS,

MASTER - GENERAL OF THE ORDNANCE,

G. C. B., G. C. H., &c. &c. &c.,

WHOSE GALLANTRY AS A SOLDIER, AND

WHOSE INESTIMABLE EXCELLENCES

AS A FRIEND, ARE SO HIGHLY

APPRECIATED BY ALL

WHO HAD THE HONOUR OF SERVING IN

THE HUSSAR BRIGADE.

THESE VOLUMES,

ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.



GUARDS HUSSARS AND INFANTRY.

ADVENTURES OF
HARRY AUSTIN.

CHAPTER I.

THERE stands, or rather did stand, at the extremity of Claverton Downs, one of those venerable looking mansions now so seldom to be met with in any part of England---the ancient style of architecture having long ceased to be employed in renovating the mouldering fabrics, to make way for the more modern advantages of space and light, in place of the low-roofed, gloomy apart-

ments wherein our ancestors delighted to ensconce themselves.

At the time, however, of which I am now writing, Selby Hall still continued to rear its high gable ends and Gothic arches in the centre of a spacious park, which, extending to a considerable distance, visibly demonstrated the care and attention bestowed on the property, and the interest taken in its prosperity by a resident owner.

A broad and deep flight of massive steps, flanked on either side by the curiously carved balustrade, led to the Hall, the walls of which were decorated with many an insignia of sylvan warfare, arranged in quaint devices between the gloomy and forbidding-looking full-length portraits of the former proprietors of the soil.

Most ingeniously had the architect contrived so to encumber the building with useless passages, and elaborately carved staircases, that

little space remained for the actual comfort and accommodation of the occupants ; and, save the small glimmering of light struggling through the apertures intended for windows, and hardly more than sufficient to point out the sombre appearance of the wainscotting, the owner of the mansion might be said to have dwelt in perpetual dimness.

Nevertheless, I was fond of the old Hall ; and now, even at this distance of time, I call to mind the various grotesque figures thickly distributed throughout the dwelling, with a feeling somewhat akin to the recollection of friends with whose faces we were quite familiar in our childhood, but who, having preceded us in our mortal career, have long since reached the final goal, at which all animate as well as inanimate things must, in due course of time, arrive.

In this abode was I ushered into the world ; and, having had the fortune to make my appear-

ance as the heir, my *entrè* occasioned more rejoicing than, in all probability, would have been made manifest had I brought up the rear of a long list of little brothers and sisters. But it was decreed that no further addition of a similar kind should be made to my father's establishment---fate having prohibited any rival from sharing the whippings and sweetmeats unsparingly lavished during the first years of my childhood.

A lengthened detail of infantine rewards and corrections is the most inordinately tiresome infliction upon earth ; even the sayings and doings of one of the precocious of the genus I hold in absolute abhorrence, when employed as an endless theme of conversation.

Such being my opinion, it were ungrateful on my part, did I cease to admire the stoical firmness and patient endurance with which certain old ladies of my mother's acquaintance were in

the almost daily habit of listening to a detail of my extraordinary quickness, --- by illustrating which, nothing was made apparent save the incomparable thickness of my skull and proportionate vacuity within.

But, before I pass over these—as my mother's antiquated friends were wont to term them---“interesting days of childhood,” I would fain issue my veto against a statement commonly asserted, and as commonly received, touching the felicity, or otherwise, of the period in question.

Now, it happened that, within a short distance from the Hall, dwelt a Reverend gentleman, portly in person, pompous in manner; but, at heart, I verily believe, an excellent man. Many and often were the times this worthy divine honoured with his presence the dining-room of my respected sire; and so congenial to his taste did he find my father's conversation and my

father's dinners---the latter digested with as much relish as the former---that the period of absence between his visitations seldom exceeded three or four days. Such being the frequency of his visits, it was impossible that so important an individual as myself should altogether escape his notice ; on the contrary, he invariably accosted me in a slow, sonorous tone, his great fat hand resting on my head, to the effect that I should never enjoy more unalloyed felicity on earth than I then possessed ; and promised me a continuance thereof upon my arrival at school. If the Reverend gentleman really preached as he felt, his scholastic days must indeed have passed in the quintessence of tranquillity, since, to have exceeded the ease and quiet of his after life---at least, when luxuriating as Rector of Selby---would have been a matter of no small difficulty, indeed.

Be this however as it may ; I found in after

days many epochs more pregnant with agreeable associations and pleasureable sensations than I remember to have experienced at Eton, when watching, in an anxiety of anticipation, the hand of the huge clock over the cloisters, wending its certain way to the awful completion of the twelfth hour; a period not a little dreaded by all those miserable delinquents whose names would then be found inscribed in that much feared and obnoxious document, yclept, "the Bill." I have often wondered why the term "Bill," was given to the scrap of paper whereon the names of those destined to offer up their persons for the exercise of the head master's ingenuity were inscribed; neither have I up to this period been enabled to solve the problem further than by adopting the supposition that, as the word "Bill" conveyed the most disagreeable and unwelcome association of ideas to the understanding of the preceptor

so did he hope by affixing it to the document connected with the extreme penalty for juvenile offences, that it might increase the horrors, and multiply the fearful excitement in the imaginations of those committed to his charge. Whether my conjecture on this point be right, or otherwise, I cannot tell ; but certain it is I then imbibed a most implacable hatred, not only to the name, but to all its concomitant evils, whether as at Eton, exemplified in the rapid evolutions of a birchen rod ; or, in after days, by the still more dreaded importunities of a troublesome creditor. But to my tale.

At no great distance from Selby, stood the red brick abode of Sir Frederick Distowe, raising its ill-formed and unsightly structure, amid an extent of wood, the felling of which appeared to be the principal occupation that employed the Baronet's time, whenever he condescended to visit his neglected mansion. As

this worthy personage will, but too frequently, appear as one of the leading characters in the history of my (not altogether) uneventful career; and, since, through his instrumentality, much, that was either good or evil in my disposition, has been called into existence; which, without some powerful stimulant, might for ever have lain dormant,---I will briefly endeavour to sketch the portrait of this individual, unbiassed by any of those feelings which, as my narrative will disclose, his every act and duplicity towards me were well calculated to arouse.

Years on years have rolled by, since the existence of the period I am now recalling to memory; and here, at this distant date, when many of those of whom I write have long since passed away, I trust it will not be supposed that an unforgiving spirit of revenge, or deeply seated feeling of aversion, has, even in the most remote degree, biassed my opinion in describing

scenes which I have endeavoured to pourtray. Those feelings and passions, to which I have alluded, have long since ceased to exist; and though the circumstances which called them into play may remain vividly impressed on the recollection, the chief actors, through whose instrumentality they were created, are now slumbering peacefully in the dust; while I--- a toiling and way-worn wanderer, must, in the common course of nature, speedily expect to be called likewise. With me, the fiery blood of youth has cooled down to the calm and steady pulse of old age; the dreamy joys of childhood, and the bright and glorious anticipations of manhood, have each in their turn held me captive; and have in succession faded away--- seldom climbing beyond the threshold of the ideal structure which existed but in my own too sanguine expectations.

Those who have wronged me, or through

whose machinations I have been compelled to taste the bitter cup of misery, I freely, and from the innermost recesses of my heart willingly, forgive; and may those whom I have injured extend the same pardon towards myself, and with like sincerity and truth as that which I proffer towards them. My motive in transcribing these memoirs is unshackled and apart from any desire of holding up to animadversion the deeds of others; and the candour with which I have expatiated on my own inaccuracies, as well as pointed out the foibles of my contemporaries, will, I trust, exonerate me from so heavy a charge: what that motive is I may, perchance, if my readers so will it, have a future opportunity of promulgating; but, at present, it cannot pass my lips, neither may my pen betray the secret, be it what it may: for the time being it must remain impenetrably hidden.

Although the mansion of Sir Frederick

Distowe was within a short drive of Selby; and notwithstanding the great paucity of gentlemen's seats then existing in our neighbourhood, the intercourse between the two families seldom extended beyond the common forms of politeness, and the usual and necessary formal exchange of gastronomic civilities, which have ever been held in England as the surest way to afford gratification, or bestow a compliment, upon either a friend or a stranger. From these periodical dinners, I was of course excluded; but, when about eight or nine years old, I well remember the tall, handsome figure of the Baronet who, at that time, could not have numbered more than five-and-thirty years.

The pursuits of my father, whether for amusement or study, were so diametrically opposite to those of his neighbour that, had it not been for those occasional interruptions to their estrangement, and which were apparently

continued for no other reason than that each seemed loath to be the first to break a long-cemented, though slender bond of amity, I do not conjecture either party would have looked upon the annihilation of the custom with any feeling approaching to regret.

From my earliest recollection, I had an instinctive dislike to my father's guest; but for what reason it would, perhaps, be difficult to state: true it is, his name was not unfrequently uttered, and nearly as often in connection with some tale of mystery or evil; but, whether true or not, I was then too young to have understood their purport, even had the wondrous accounts been better authenticated. Still, there *were* stories continually in circulation, reprehending the dissolute style of life in which he was said to luxuriate. His house was the receptacle for the idle and profligate; and it was whispered that, when once within the toils of the wily

Baronet, it were difficult to escape from his meshes, without considerable loss, both of character and fortune.

Married at an early age to a beautiful and highly gifted woman, it was possible that the follies of his boyhood might have given place to more rational and less objectionable pursuits ; but, as yet, he had not tasted dissipation to satiety : and his being an abject slave to that contemptible weakness, an inordinate desire of adulation, led him to squander his wealth and commit those excesses in the Metropolis, where his depraved and vitiated taste could most easily find objects willing and ready to administer to his every caprice. Meanwhile, his lovely bride was left in solitude, to mourn over the extinction of the bright dreams of felicity her imagination conjured up in far happier, though not long distant, days.

Sometimes, indeed, when thwarted in the

execution of some favourite project ; or perhaps disgusted for the moment, at the continuance of his unprincipled career, he would speed down to his ill-fated wife, and vent his spleen and ill humour on the only being to whom he was an object of affection and solicitude.

From her lips no murmur, no complaint, was heard---alike regardless of every passing occurrence, her mind would dwell with a gloomy pleasure on each trivial circumstance of her heart's hapless attachment ; until---finding every effort ineffectual to obtain that love which she once believed herself to have possessed,---she sunk into an untimely grave, the victim of a heartless and unprincipled sensualist.

Far from being touched with remorse, when the total absence of every feeling of common decency or humanity had shortened the miserable existence of Lady Distowe, his thoughts were wholly engrossed with plans and specula-

tions, as to the quickest and most effectual mode, of repairing the great inroads his extravagant and licentious career had made on his fortune. One method, to attain this much to be desired end, was speedily put in practice. His Myrmidons and companions in profligacy hunted, with the tenacity of bloodhounds, each wealthy novice who annually appeared upon town. An introduction was speedily sought,---an acquaintance as readily commenced,---a friendship (as Hotspur says "Heav'n save the mark") cemented---and some trifling civility officiously and pertinaciously thrust upon the victim; until he soon fancied himself under heavy obligations to his kind Mentor; and, in fact, found his new and disinterested friend so pre-eminently useful that his presence and advice became of the first importance on all occasions. Then comes the principle partner in the oft - practised plot, another introduction,---an invitation to shoot or

hunt over his property, proposed probably in a moment of excitement, while flushed with wine; and as readily, and perhaps almost unconsciously, accepted; then the hazarded opinion touching the distance of the land of Promise from Town. Quickly the disputants wax eager, and, energetic with well-feigned interest on the subject, each offers to back his assertion with a heavy bet; books are produced---notes taken---and all is accomplished, save the final decision on the knotty point. When and how is the affair to come off? Why not now? What time so good as the present? Nothing to keep them in town.

The servants can follow. Another bottle, and the carriage is at the door---no time is given for reflection. In a few hours the portal of the fatal mansion receives its victim; and every allure-ment that can fascinate and enchain the sense is sedulously administered, till, in spite of each glittering bait, the victim at length feels the

arrow enter into his soul ; and the poor wretch wakes to a consciousness of his folly and his guilt, aggravated with the knowledge that the greater part, or probably the whole, of his worldly substance has passed from his possession for ever.

CHAPTER II.

DAYS of childhood have their bitterness, as well as those in after life ; and my first introduction to sorrow was occasioned by my father's death. Though too young fully to appreciate the whole extent of my loss, I was far from being insensible to my bereavement, which the many symbols of woe and lamentation around could not fail to pourtray. The rooms of the old Hall, at all times gloomy, were now made doubly so by the half-closed casements. Silently, and with grave and dismal looks, the domestics glided along the ancient corridors ; seldom or never speaking,

but in whispers. Strange figures clothed in black wandered about the building; and, amid the cessation of all the customary occupations of the household, I was left entirely to my own guidance.

My mother I did not see for days; and at length, without well knowing wherefore, I felt, in heart, what many of those around me were only paid for pourtraying in their countenances. Shunning the dismal looks, whether real or pretended, which met me at every turn, I hastily quitted the more frequented parts of the building, and unconsciously sought my father's library. There, in a long, black coffin, supported by trestles in the centre of the room, reposed all that remained of my once kind parent. And instead of the dear, familiar faces, and joyous laugh that used so often to gladden our happy circle, when seated at evening round the cheerful fire in that very room, there stood rude and

coarse-looking men, each clothed in the habiliments of woe. Silent and still, as statues, they waited by the corpse with countenances as immoveable as their bodies.

With a mixed feeling of wonder and fear, I gazed first at the sombre pall which covered the body, and then vainly looked round in search of some face not altogether strange ; but none gazed on me save the mutes. No fire warmed the grate, though it was then the middle of winter ; and the snow beat cold and cheerlessly against the windows,---the rug was pulled from the hearth,---the furniture covered with cloths : all seemed changed and drear ; and with a heavy heart, I was turning to depart, when my eye encountered the old, red morocco chair so often shared with my indulgent parent ; and where, for hours and hours, I had rested upon his knee, till, fatigued with laughter and play, I sank to sleep on his bosom. At that moment

the old piece of furniture seemed as a tried and trusty friend: it had been pushed back but a short distance from where it usually stood; and, in all probability, had not been moved since my father rose from it for the last time. As I continued gazing on this senseless object of my attention, every kind word and gentle caress, of my poor father, came crowding thickly over my memory; and when I called to mind each endearing expression, so often used by him when addressing me, I felt my little heart throb with an agonizing sensation of grief; my head grew giddy; and, sinking on my knees beside the inanimate body, I burst into tears.

The following day, clad in my dismal garb, and led by the hand by two of my relatives, I followed the sombre pageant and waving plumes, drooping, as though in sorrow over my father's hearse. Many an hour of joy and sorrow has fled by since then; and death have I seen

in many a varied shape ; but never shall I again experience that indescribable feeling of misery, with which, for the first time, I heard the hollow sound of the clod of earth thrown on the lowered coffin, and when they let down his cold form into the damp, dreary vault prepared to receive it ; then struck on my heart the full consciousness of final separation ; and carrying with it the conviction that never again should I behold that smile which ever beamed in kindness towards me ; nor again hear that voice whose tones always fell on my ear in accents of love and affection---then it was that the full extent of my loss seemed, in one instant, to be laid open to my view ; and, for the first time in my life, I tasted the bitter cup of misery.

When next I entered the old family pew, I found a large marble slab placed against the wall of the church, whereon was recorded a brief epitaph of my deceased parent's birth and death.

But why was the inscription so short, compared with the size of the tablet whereon it was engraved? Was the blank space only left, until the dark tomb should claim another victim? Alas! too soon the sculptor was called upon to resume his labours, and finish the inscription which he had but half completed.

It neyer was intended that grief for the dead should monopolize the interest and attention claimed by the living; at least, so think the members of that intricate, complicated, and much to be feared profession yclept the law: for hardly had my poor father received the last offices from his survivors, than a new race of beings took possession of the Hall; but of a far different stamp to that of their predecessors. The gloomy, immoveable mutes disappeared; but in their place stood a dapper, smart, little gentleman, well versed in the quirks and quibbles of the law. His sage head, neatly, and

with much care besprinkled with a thin coat of powder; his upper garment was of a light brown, while the coverings of his legs, made of a similar description of cloth, were met below the knee by a pair of well used, vinegar-topped, boots. To this gentleman was confided the task of searching and prying into every possible and impossible hole and corner, where either will, testamentary document, or codicil, could or could not, by any earthly possibility, be secreted. In his indefatigable researches, the man of wisdom was ably seconded by his two clerks, who, clad in garments approximating as nearly as possible in form and texture to those of their superior, dived into drawer after drawer, filled with as heterogeneous a mass, of accumulated, useless papers, as might have taken all the attornies in the county half a century to docket. Nothing daunted however by the appalling sight, the view of each newly discovered bundle of old

receipts seemed but to add to their zeal ; until, having ransacked every improbable part of the building, they bethought them of looking to the only place where it was likely such a document as that for which they were in search could be found, viz., in the drawers of the writing-table which my father was in the constant habit of using. Neither had they to prosecute their labours much farther ; for, on opening the first bureau, their sight was instantly greeted by a large packet whereon, in plain and legible letters, was inscribed, "The last Will and Testament of Julian Austin, Esq."

To take possession of the important paper, and to display the seal unbroken before the many, anxious, legacy-expectants who crowded round, were the two first actions of the indefatigable attorney ; when, securing the document in one of his enormous pockets, he proceeded to the drawing-room, followed by the

whole *posse comitatus*; first, in slow and solemn strides, as befitted the occasion; then increasing to a somewhat quicker pace, until, at length, their progress approached nearer to a run than an amble; many a one shoving his neighbour, to obtain a convenient place for hearing the Will read from first to last; probably without being gratified at finding his own nomenclature even once recorded.

The result was soon told; Selby Hall, and the property appertaining, was left to my mother in trust for me, to be delivered over on attaining my majority; and, in the event of my dying prior to my surviving parent, it was to revert to her, with full and entire controul over the whole: exclusive of this arrangement, a considerable sum in ready money became at her immediate disposal; there were some small legacies of little moment; and, altogether, I imagine, few wills ever occupied less time in

reading, or afforded such trifling satisfaction to the numerous and expectant listeners.

Of course, the report of the contents of the document soon found its way through the neighbourhood; and by more than one needy adventurer was my mother regarded in the light of a necessary appendage to his establishment, provided she could be induced to trust her happiness and fortune within his power. By none, however, were the advantages and disadvantages of such a union weighed and reweighed, thought on and pondered over, with more earnestness than by Sir Frederick Distowe. As to the possibility of failure of success, should he resolve on this second marriage, such a discouraging idea never entered the Baronet's speculation; and as regarded the happiness or misery, which his intended victim was likely to receive from so ill assorted a union, so pre-

posterior a consideration never, for one moment, troubled his cogitations.

At this time he had nearly exhausted not only his finances, but his credit; the latter as much in character, as in pecuniary affairs. A long succession of dupes, turned pennyless from the fatal gambling-table of the Baronet, to vent their execrations against the authors of their ruin, in every society where they could be met with, at length attracted the notice of even those whose pursuits, being far from dissimilar, would gladly have avoided being called upon to interfere. Under these circumstances, it was not much to be wondered at that this worthy personage at length decided on the eligibility of propping up his broken credit with the substantial aid of my mother's fortune, even though hampered with the encumbrance of the lady; and, taking into consideration my sickly appearance, and with a lively faith in the in-

fallibility of those manifold diseases to which children are liable ; the chance of the whole property falling into his possession appeared neither impossible, nor indeed extremely improbable.

In due time, Sir Frederick's visits to the Hall were in every respect diametrically opposite to those recorded as being paid by angels ; for instead of few and far between, their recapitulations were so frequent, and so small a pause divided their continuance, that they might almost be said to have condensed themselves into one endless visitation ; and when, by chance, I happened to cross his path, he was wont to cast on me one of those sweet glances of recognition, which a wolf may be supposed to exhibit when gazing on a coveted object placed beyond his power of appropriation.

What motive influenced my mother's better

judgment in this affair, I never was able to discover ; but so pertinaciously did she resist all argument and advice, having for their object the annulment of her purposed engagement, that, one by one, her friends ceased to importune her on the subject ; and, at length, all preliminaries having been effected, the lawyer withdrew, to make room for the ecclesiastic, through whose instrumentality she claimed the privilege of being accosted as Lady Distowe.

Perhaps it was the magic which one small word is known to possess over the female heart that captivated my poor mother ; that of adding her name to the long list of fair and lovely beings who have sacrificed their real happiness by grasping at a coveted title.

But a very brief period had elapsed when I discovered the new establishment was of a far different description from the old one ; so much

so, that I would most willingly have exchanged the occupations of home, for the rough treatment of a school. As for my step-father, he, who never had been particularly partial to my appearance, now ceased to consider me but as a detested obstacle, intervening between the possession of Selby and his inestimable self; and most gladly would he have hastened my departure for another and a better world, had any convenient method for disposing of me suggested itself.

Although I never observed any decided act of ill treatment, on the part of her husband towards my mother, still, there was sufficient in the manner of the latter to convince me that the recollection of her friends' opinion, respecting her second marriage, often forced itself on her mind with a bitter, though unavailing, feeling of regret; and when, in obedience with the mandate of Sir Frederick, I made my juvenile

preparations for my departure for Eton, the only regret I felt was the anticipated separation from my mother.

Kind and affectionate as she had ever been, her former regard was but indifference compared to the overwhelming solicitude and alacrity with which my every wish was now administered to: frequently would she take me with her to a beautiful, but then neglected, hermitage, where, in happier days, many a merry coterie had assembled. There have I often witnessed the indulgence of grief, the existence of which was so carefully hidden from the notice of others. Seated in this retired spot, and clasping my hands with the slight pressure of her delicate fingers, she would remain wholly absorbed in reflection: sometimes my childish impatience, at the protracted silence, would bring my mother's name to my lips, in the hope of drawing her attention towards me;

then would she fold me in her arms, and, pressing my cheek to her wan lips, a gush of tears, indicating the anguish of her heart, frequently accompanied the fond caress.

On the morning of my leaving home, I was sent for to my mother's room, when, taking from a small ebony cabinet two portraits curiously cased in beautifully embossed gold, she placed round my neck that which was a likeness of herself, retaining the other, which was a miniature of my father; they were admirably executed; the cases were exactly similar, and evidently the work of no inferior artist. As my mother fastened the picture round my neck, she endeavoured to speak, but tears impeded her utterance: her dark blue eyes were swollen with weeping; and the pale quivering lip told she had passed the previous night in restlessness and watching.

At that instant, every anticipation of pleasure

fled ; and gladly would I have sacrificed all my ideal felicity, if permitted to have remained with my mother. But it could not be ; I was forced from her last affectionate embrace ; and a few minutes more found me on the road to Eton.

CHAPTER III.

“FLOREAT ETONA,” and most willingly do I echo the motto which, emblazoned on the standard of the Ten-oar, floats proudly in advance of all his associates, freighted with their juvenile crews. And though I passed many happy hours on the banks of old Father Thames, still, my enjoyments were not of that unalloyed description so perseveringly stated by my old friend the Rector. Of course I had my share of bad usage; thereby instructing me fully in the most approved way of retaliating on others, for the inflictions I had suffered in my own person.

My holydays were seldom passed at Selby ; indeed, so little did Sir Frederick appear satisfied, when the periods arrived for my return home, that his aversion towards me gained in strength as my increase of years and improvement in health threw his chance of succession further in the shade ; and, at length, my visits became so decidedly irksome that my mother, who could not avoid witnessing the many slights and humiliating annoyances to which I was continually subjected, sought and obtained permission for me to pass the vacations at my uncle's ; at whose house I always found a ready welcome, and from whom I invariably received the greatest proofs of kindness.

In early life, my ancient relative had from choice entered the army ; but, though always employed, it had been his fate rather to have served against climate, than in front of marshalled battalions, and I believe there was hardly

a burning spot on earth, or an unhealthy station in our possession, that had not at some period or other been visited by him. But his chief delight consisted in recounting the ten thousand times told story of the taking of Guadeloupe. That my uncle had indeed proved his gallantry and tactics on that, to him, most memorable occasion, I doubt not in the least; but as it formed the most prominent of his military exploits, so was it made the chief topic of his conversation; and whenever, by fair means or foul, the narrative could by any possibility be pressed into the service, it was but too certain to appear.

Without having had opportunities to distinguish himself on any more memorable occasion, he had, step by step, mounted the ladder of his profession, from which he had seen more drop from disease than by the sword, until he found himself in his old age a General Officer, with

a few letters of the alphabet appended to his name ; and his retired allowance to luxuriate on, as he best could. Fortunately for him, he was not dependent on the latter ; for, exclusive of a small property of his own, my father's liberality had long since made his brother as independent as he wished. Late in life, he had married, adding thereby to his wealth ; but too soon was his partner taken from him, leaving one daughter on whom all his thoughts and affections were now turned : varied occasionally with oft-repeated recollections of Lieutenant General Sir Charles Grey, and the year 1794. A dozen times a day, at least, did my uncle weigh anchor from the Bay of Port Royal, and sail against Guadaloupe : the Quebec, the Blanche, the Ceres, and the Rose, frigates were but part of the formidable fleet his recollection was continually placing under sailing orders. And had the French garrison, under General

Collot, marched out of the town as often in one year, as my uncle made them abandon it in a day, they must have been pretty conversant with the road. General Dundas, Sir Charles Grey, and Sir John Jervis, were his heroes of romance ; while Guadaloupe, with its neighbouring islands, was in his opinion the very land of chivalry.

I was now fifteen, and, having been pressed by my uncle to make choice of a profession, felt but too happy in pronouncing, in accordance with his views, my determination in favour of the army. The only drawback, in my good relative's estimation, was the improbability of such another harvest of laurels presenting itself as was reaped in the ever memorable year, 1794, at Guadaloupe. But, he would add, in conclusion to one of his repeated descriptions of the capture, "But my boy, don't be cast down on that score: though Dundas is gone, and many a

gallant spirit with him, still there is no reason why you should not see something in your time ; though to be sure it is not to be expected that such an expedition as I have witnessed can occur more than once in a century."

No opposition to my entering the army was contemplated from Sir Frederick Distowe ; and indeed his reply to my uncle, on the subject, only denoted his gratification at my having voluntarily offered him a fresh and no unsubstantial chance in favour of his succeeding to Selby.

My poor mother had long been aware of the impossibility of my step-father's sentiments towards me undergoing any change ; and accordingly her consent was willingly bestowed to my entering a profession suggested by my uncle, and approved by myself. Application was accordingly made to the Horse Guards ; and, in about three weeks afterwards, when

sitting on the long-walk wall ; and engaged in deep and learned conversation with those well-known characters, Jem Miller, Jack Garraway and Shampo, most learnedly expatiating on the merits and demerits of rats, dogs, and casting nets ; a letter from my uncle was put into my hands, stating that His Royal Highness had been pleased to appoint me to a cornetcy in the Hussars ; and directing me to join at Ipswich with as little delay as possible.

Enclosed was a sum of money to defray my existing expenses, and a postscript advised me to start for London forthwith ; whence, having issued the necessary directions for my outfit, I was to run down to the country, and bid my friends adieu previous to commencing my new career. Across the letter in red ink was written : “ My dear boy, I am sorry His Royal Highness did not place you in the Infantry ; although I am told it is the greater compliment your

having been gazetted to the Hussars. This may be so, for all I know; but though I can pretty clearly remember every regiment I have served with, I don't recollect any of the Hussar Brigade at Guadaloupe."

I cannot leave Eton without recounting a scene with "The Doctor," for whom we all felt no slight degree of awe; and so firmly had his authoritative manner, engendered and matured by his constant association with the boys, superseded a more bland and courteous demeanour, that, even in after life, when conversing with those who had once been his pupils, he either could not, or would not, take the trouble to deviate from his habitual pomposity. Some years afterwards, I happened to be quartered at Windsor; and, having called on the Doctor, but not finding him at home, I one day chanced to meet him in the street. I instantly accosted him; and, losing no time in making

myself known, requested he would honour me by naming a day when he might make it convenient to dine with me. Looking me full in the face, with a frown that instantly brought to my mind the remembrance of an anticipated, and immediately to be executed, castigation, he replied in his sharp caustic tone, “Eh! dine with you, eh!! at the mess, I suppose, eh! very likely indeed: eh! you were always a bad boy at school—go along, sir—go along! dine at the mess, indeed! bad boy—bad boy—eh!” and off he started,—leaving me to ponder on the various modes in which invitations, well meant, are very frequently regarded.

At length the day arrived for my farewell to ‘the distant spires and antique towers.’ According to custom, from time immemorial, I fed my friends with a breakfast of ice and sausages at Garraways—received from each a splendidly bound book; the leaves of which, I verily be-

lieve, have never seen the light up to this hour ---took my ceremonious leave of the Doctor, who, when cordially shaking hands at my final exit from his chambers, failed not to scrape the palm of my claw, with the sharp nails of his fingers, searching for the talismanic bit of paper which long habit had taught him the digits of his departing pupils were always sure to enclose. With a mixture of pride, joy and regret, I mounted Jack Moody's four-horse power; and in three hours found myself at Hyde Park Corner.

"Where shall I set you down, sir?" said Jack, seated, in all the pride of coachmanship, on the box of his true blue coloured vehicle,---
"Where shall I set you down, sir? Here we is at the Park Gate, and as I always stops at the White Horse Cellar, may be you'd fancy Hatchett's---clean, cheap, and all that sort of thing; besides which, quite convenient to my

coach — shall I put you down there, sir? ”

“ With all my heart, Jack,” replied I ; “ I’ve got some business to transact in London, which will keep me a day or two ; so it’s little matter where I put up.”

In brief time we drew up at that bazaar of coaches, the White Horse Cellar ; and I soon found myself seated in solitary grandeur, the sole occupant of one of the long, narrow boxes of a noisy, and not most delectable, coffee-room. Here then, thought I—commences my career of manhood—I have left school—am now an officer in the army—plenty of money—my own master in London,—and some days at my disposal. Who does not remember the luxurious delight enjoyed when first emerging from the trammels and restraints of school? Then it is we strive to conceal our youth, as though our juvenility were a fault ; and, in the endeavour to follow the example of our elders,

often deem their foibles laudable, and their very imperfections worthy of imitation. At that epoch of our existence all seems to smile around—the path of pleasure appears but as a garden decked with the choicest and most beautiful exotics—the thorns are hidden by the leaves and flowers—the hollow selfishness of the world is imperceptible—the cold, calculating speculations of self-interest, and the deceitful smile of envy, are alike hidden from the view. Then it is we judge the sentiments and professions of others by our own buoyant and gladsome elasticity of spirits. In every acquaintance we think we discover a friend; and seldom, at that age, do we entertain a doubt but that all our beatifical visions will be realized. Alas! that those feelings and ideas should pass away! but so it is. A little intercourse with mankind—a slight knowledge of the world—an instance of treachery or deceit made visible; and then we become as

worldly as our neighbours, and have nothing more of excellence to recommend us than has fallen to the lot of those around.

Not very similar to the foregoing were my cogitations at this period : for although I was, for the time, much engrossed with my own thoughts, they partook of a far more brilliant colour. I was turning over in my own mind how I had better commence the round of gaiety and amusement I had promised myself ; and as my eyes rapidly scanned the luxurious banquet advertised in the columns of the newspaper laid before me, I was quite at a loss to know with which to commence. In this dilemma, I was about to call in the assistance of the waiter, he being, as I thought, a person well qualified to decide on so knotty a point,—when my intention was rendered unnecessary by an unexpected proffer of assistance tendered on the part of a very gentlemanlike, middle-aged man, who

seeing, I suppose, my isolated condition, and, judging, from my youth, that inexperience was my only fellow traveller, kindly advanced his counsel and support.

“I trust, sir,” exclaimed my new acquaintance, crossing to the box where I was stationed, with a pewter ink-stand and an old newspaper before me, “I sincerely hope, sir, you will pardon my apparent rudeness in addressing a gentleman to whom I have not the honour of being personally known. But, if I am not much deceived, by your great likeness to an old and much valued friend of mine—” here my kind Mentor heaved an awful sigh—“I should say I was now addressing a son of the late owner of Selby. If I am right,” he continued, “I trust no apology is requisite; if wrong—I have but to express my sorrow at having needlessly disturbed your reverie.” Whether, however, right or wrong, my new acquaintance seemed fully determined

I should have the benefit of his companionship, for, without further preface, or apology, he gently slid into an opposite seat ; and, calling for a bottle of claret, invited me to aid in its annihilation. It occupied but short time and little trouble for my new acquaintance to pump me in a most effectual manner ; and, ere half an hour had passed, I believe he knew as much of my affairs as I did myself. His conversation was extremely agreeable ; and, as glass after glass of my host's potent liquid found its way to my mouth, I became particularly loquacious and communicative.

That my companion had been an old friend of my father's I never, for an instant, entertained a doubt ; and, indeed, had any suspicion of the veracity of his story entered my imagination, it must as instantly have been dispelled, on hearing him refer to places and anecdotes connected with my home, which none but a person well

acquainted with the family and the neighbourhood could have been conversant with.

Had I been as collected after our second bottle as I was before our first, I might have remembered that, some half hour previous, I had myself detailed the various anecdotes, the relation of which afterwards I accepted as certain proofs of his being what he represented himself. But, by this time, I felt any thing but inclined to pry into the motives and actions of any one—much less could I for an instant hesitate to believe whatever so delightful a companion chose to assert.

Merrily passed the time, and gaily sped the bottle to and fro, when the clock struck nine; at which my companion, starting from his seat, declared he had a most particular engagement to keep that evening, and regretted that he had already overstaid his time. "It was most provoking,—surely the clock must be wrong—it

could not be so late—his own repeater he had left at home by accident—and *his* watch never went wrong—timed it that morning by the Horse Guards. Had I a watch about me? Perhaps I would oblige him by seeing if it really *was* nine that struck. Sorry to give me so much trouble,—but it was of great consequence for him to know.” In an instant my gold watch was produced—a present, by the bye, from my kind old Guadaloupe uncle—the point was settled—and, for the last time, my unfortunate repeater rested in the fob of my sky-blue inexpressibles.

“Waiter, waiter!” exclaimed the gentleman in a hurry, “Get a coach—quick—d’ye hear?—Egad, sir,” continued he, turning to me, “I am extremely sorry at being obliged to lose such agreeable society; but business, you know, my dear young friend, business must be attended to—”

“Oh, certainly!” was my answer, thanks to the copious libations, not well knowing what I said; “business, as you say, business must be attended to—but you wont be all night at your business, I suppose? Why not let us go to the play, as soon as you are disengaged?”

“Delighted! I shall be charmed!” he replied; “and, now I think of it, why not accompany me now? I have but a gentleman to call on, who will not long detain me, and then we can proceed together.”

“With all my heart!” said I, putting on my gloves, and preparing to depart. “I hear the coach driving up to the door, so let’s be off.” In accordance wherewith we were on the point of leaving the coffee-room, when the waiter re-appeared with the never-failing bit of indited paper, exclaiming, in a soft smoothing tongue, “The bill, gentlemen,—the bill, if you please!”

“Oh!—Ah!—the bill, to be sure—the bill!”

replied my friend, echoing the waiter's words ;
“ Oh ! it 's of no consequence now—we shall return. Besides, this gentleman's staying in the house—Are you not, my young friend ?” he continued, turning to me.

“ Yes, to be sure I am,” I answered, not well understanding what my staying in the house had to do with the bill ; “ didn't I come up from Eton this morning, in Moody's coach ?”

“ Oh ! I beg your pardon, sir,” answered the facetious waiter. “ Is your luggage in the house, sir ?”

“ Of course it is,” chimed in my friend. “ Two portmanteaus, a trunk, and a hat-box No. 33. What the devil do you ask for ? Come, open the door, we shall be kept here all night. Damned impertinent !” he muttered, as he stepped into the leather convenience.

“ Yes,” hiccupped I, stumbling after him up the crazy steps ; “ damned impertinent—very !”

and away we rattled, in one of those now nearly obsolete vehicles, an ancient London hackney coach.

As it was a matter of perfect indifference to me to what place we were driven, I never thought of inquiring on the subject, until our Jehu pulled up at the door of a dirty-looking spirit and eating-house in Piccadilly, when, my friend having descended from our coach, invited me to follow him into the building.

Immediately on entering the mansion, I discovered half a dozen people actively engaged in opening oysters, and making visible preparations for an extensive feast. Passing through this outer shop, or entrance, I was shown into a spacious saloon, brilliantly illuminated, and decorated with the most gaudy ornaments procurable. Here again, as at my last abode, the sides of the walls were divided by planks of wood running out some eight feet towards the

centre, the enclosures resembling the stalls of a stable. Above the floor on which I stood ran a gallery encircling the entire room, in which were laid numerous small tables covered with the usual appurtenances to a supper ; but as yet the guests had not arrived. While occupied in viewing this, to me, novel spectacle, my friend, sending his eye rapidly round the room, in search of some object, proceeded forthwith to the farther corner, where, ensconced in a huge, shaggy white coat, sat a solitary being, contemplating, as though in deep thought, the bottom of an empty tankard placed before him. What their subject of conversation might have been, I know not ; but, from the frequent glances bestowed on my humble person, I could not avoid supposing myself not altogether unnoticed in their discourse. Presently, however, my acquaintance rose to depart ; while he of the shaggy coat, calling for a fresh tankard, again betook himself

to his solitary cogitations. Meanwhile, in reply to my various inquiries regarding the place we were then in, my mentor informed me that, later in the evening, it was the resort of the gayest and most fashionable persons about town, and strongly urged me to accompany him back again, after having visited the theatre. Even to *my* inexperience there appeared some incongruities in my friend's statement; for few Eton boys can reconcile the idea of a coarse-featured, savage looking man, in a shaggy great coat, with his hat on, drinking out of a pewter tankard in an oyster-house, being synonymous with an assembly-room frequented by the gayest and most fashionable about London. But at the age of fifteen we do not weigh and balance the probable truth or falsehood of what we hear, with the jealousy and caution of the wariness of forty.

Drury Lane was the place of our destination;

and what with the music, scenery, the stage, the lights, and the excitement naturally attendant on the novelty of the sight, I was perfectly enchanted. Seeing me in such good spirits, my friend appeared determined I should retain them ; and, for fear that the natural buoyancy of youth, unsupported by artificial means, might droop prematurely, he continually plied me with divers beverages, which certainly tended in no great degree to clear my already clouded brain.

My friend appeared to have a very numerous acquaintance ; and hardly a lady passed, of whom there were many walking about the passages, on account, as I supposed, of the great heat in the boxes, without his being favoured with some token of recognition : but whenever they noticed my inestimable self hanging on his arm, the circumstance afforded them unbounded merriment : all this was incomprehen-

sible to me, but yet it was very delightful. The saloon appeared, in my uninitiated eyes, a perfect paradise, and its frequenters the fabled inhabitants.

On leaving the theatre, I was much struck at the anxiety my friend evinced when passing two men in red waistcoats and blue coats, who were stationed at the bottom of the stairs. He slouched his hat over his eyes,—pulled his collar and neckcloth to his nose, shrugged his shoulders up till he looked hump-backed,—faltered in his gait, and so completely, in one moment, did he metamorphose himself, that a passer-by would have taken him for an old man of eighty, at least. When outside the house, he resumed his former appearance ; and, on my enquiring the reason of his having disguised himself when passing the two red-waistcoated mortals, he replied, in a modest, unaffected manner, that the truth was, some time ago, he

lent those two men a large sum of money, which he knew they were yet unable to pay; and whenever he met them, he endeavoured to disguise himself, as he well knew the sight of him to whom they yet remained so much in debt must wound their feelings too poignantly, since it must recal to their minds their apparent ingratitude. Did not this evince a good heart? the kind and generous friend? Not only did he put up with the severe loss of his property, but actually inconvenienced himself for fear of hurting the susceptibility of his debtors: all the punch and claret I had drunk rallied round my heart, and I swore he was the finest fellow of whom I had ever heard or read.

Of the remainder of this, to me, eventful evening, I have but an indistinct recollection; though I had not so lost the command of my senses but I can call to mind our return to Piccadilly; where we found the before deserted

apartment now crowded to excess. We joined a party, who invited us to supper, among whom was the gentleman of the shaggy garment; when noise, clamour, and singing appeared the predominant occupations. A mist passed before my eyes—I felt a lightness and gaiety unspeakable—I was profuse in my offers of good offices, and shaking hands: I sang—shouted—I felt as if the world was my own. The lights multiplied ten-fold; instead of one gallery above my head, I saw twenty—instead of one waiter, twenty waiters,—every thing seemed to expand and multiply. My head grew perfectly giddy—glass succeeded glass: though hitherto free from stammering, I was suddenly seized with a most uncontrollable stutter. In attempting to rise, I lost my balance, and upset a candle over a fair lady opposite, of whom, for the last hour, I had seen fifty exactly alike. The flame of the candle caught the fine feathers of her head

dress, then again, instead of one lady on fire, I saw fifty ladies on fire; then there was a yell—a scream—the lights were put out—a horrible sensation, as though my head was being crushed: I felt myself forcibly taken off my legs—my body went round and round like a whirligig at a fair. The pockets of my trousers, as if astonished at the noise, suddenly sprung out, as to witness what was going on: all objects danced as if the universe had lost its balance; and all beyond was indistinct, and nothingness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE following morning I awoke in a high fever. A most excessive thirst parched up my mouth and throat; while the pulses of my head throbbed as if about to burst. I felt sick both in mind and body; and as by slow degrees the recollection of the events of the previous evening rose to view, my morning reflections thereon differed widely from the excited feelings of the previous night. At length, endeavouring to collect my scattered faculties, I sat up, not a little perplexed, as the place in which I found myself became distinct.

It was a small wretched apartment, with but one miserable window, the broken panes of which had in most instances dropt out, leaving a free opening for the cold frosty air, save where, here and there, a bundle of dirty rags had been thrust in the apertures. The roof was low, and black with smoke and filth; while a small fireplace without a grate gave every encouragement for the wind to rush down the chimney, which it did with a low melancholy whistle. Neither chair nor table was in the room, the only furniture it could boast being the apology for a bed—if bed that thing could be called on which I found myself lying. This delectable couch was composed of two or three old sacks, partly filled with damp straw and hay, which in all probability had been purloined from some neighbouring mews—these were cast upon the floor for want of a beadstead; and a tattered patch-work counterpane or coverlet thrown over them, pre-

sented any thing but the appearance of luxury. Opposite to where I sat, was a door opening into the wall, which probably led to some closet or small inner room.

I was not much troubled in searching for my clothes, having apparently been cast on the ground in exactly the state I was brought from the *melée*; consequently what garments had been spared in the conflict still covered my person—but torn and soiled as they were—my head bruised and bloody—my eyes sunk in their sockets—and my pockets turned inside out—I must have presented a most humiliating picture of the dignity of man.

My watch had departed; and my purse I suppose had gone in search of it; for neither could be found—my handkerchief, and in fact the whole contents of my pockets, had disappeared. But all my pains and all my sorrow for the past were as nothing compared to the

grief I felt when, thrusting my hand in my bosom, I found my mother's miniature—the one she gave me on my first leaving home, and which till then I had ever worn, and so carefully preserved—was gone likewise. The purse might be replenished—new clothes could succeed the others—my bruises might be healed—but how could the miniature be replaced? I instantly resolved to seek my new acquaintance and solicit his aid; and I had half risen from my lair, to put my plan in execution, ere I recollected my complete ignorance of his abode. Not only was I unacquainted with the way to the scene of the last night's festivities, but wholly unaware by what name to enquire for it. What was to be done? From the window I beheld nothing but the tops of houses, and the thick smoke from the chimneys striving to force its way through the foggy atmosphere. The door of the room was fastened on the outside; and I

found myself to all intents and purposes a prisoner.

I now began to feel any thing but in a quiescent state of mind. All the awful accounts I had read of persons being kidnapped sprung to my recollection; and, as the remembrance of innumerable murders and iniquities rushed through my brain, I felt convinced I was destined to become the principal, though unwilling, performer in some most atrocious tragedy.

How I became a denizen of the disgusting hole, and why detained against my will—were questions I endeavoured to solve in vain; and, finding all my efforts to force the door wholly ineffectual; and feeling that any change must be for the better; I commenced exerting my lungs, and to their utmost pitch, wisely judging that those who took the trouble of preventing my egress were likely enough to have some farther design regarding me; and so it proved, for, after

my vocal exertions had continued for about ten or twelve minutes, I distinctly heard footsteps ascending the creaking stair-case; but when the key of the door grated in the lock, I certainly felt far from comfortable in the anticipation of the coming interview. My alarm however, on this occasion, was uncalled for: for, as the door slowly moved on its rusty hinges, a far from uncomely countenance protruded into the apartment, leaving the door so far ajar as to enable the visitor instantly to retreat and close it, had I made the least disposition to commence offensive operations; but so astonished was I, and so unexpected was the visage before me to what my imagination had been conjuring up,—that I was not in the remotest degree prepared for any such attack as the caution observed indicated an expectation of.

In truth, the countenance before me was a very pretty one—and if I betrayed astonishment

at the appearance of the damsel, it was fully equalled by the look of curiosity with which she regarded me.

The figure of my visitor was, if any thing, above the common height ; and the symmetry of her form was such as rendered even the coarse and unbecoming habiliments in which she was apparelled impossible to conceal. Her hair, which was beautifully dark, hung in long neglected ringlets over her shoulders ; while the intelligent, yet melancholy, expression of her brilliant eyes spoke eloquently the feelings of her mind. Her face was pale as marble ; and the furtive glance which ever and anon she cast behind her, plainly bespoke her fear of detection in her present occupation. " Silence ! silence ! for Heaven's sake be silent !" uttered my visitor, in a voice soft and melodious as a seraph's, though hardly above her breath ; at the same time holding up her finger as if to enforce

obedience. "Are you tired of your existence, young sir, that you thus try to rouse against you those who are but too ready to work you evil. If you would not quit life ere you have hardly commenced it, you must cease your cries for aid—for, unless I serve you, none else here will. But listen," she added, as a distant sound from below fell on the ear: "I dare not stay longer, but if possible, will return. If you value your life," she added as she silently closed the door, "you will remain silent."

The sounds which we had distinctly heard now rapidly approached; and I clearly caught the gruff tones of a man's husky voice, who, swearing the most hideous oaths, intermingled his curses with a tissue of approved slang phrases.

"Jane, Jane," exclaimed this monster of a brute, "where are you, Jane—chaffing with the kiddy? Aye! by all that's blasphemous, if that's

the kite I catch you flying, the bantling's squeeze and my morley shall rub together before he can peach your splitting. Oh! sure there you are," continued he in a milder tone. "Come, quick, Jane, quick! The Beaks are abroad—Black Jem and the Devil are both wanted—and if they can't cut their sticks before they're grabbed this time we shall dance with our shoes on for certain. We must mizzle; and you shall watch the crib. But what's to be done with the covey?" Here the voice was lost in the distance; and I was again in silence and solitude.

Now it so happened that, thanks to my Eton education, or rather to that part of it which was followed up under the tuition of Jem Miller, Jack Garraway, & Co., I was not so entirely ignorant of the elegancies and meaning of the phraseology I had just heard as might have been the case had I been brought up under the auspices of less enlightened instructors. The

consequence was I was able to glean that my fair visitor was likely to incur censure for having visited my prison ; while I, it appeared, was destined for a “job;” which said job was to be undertaken by my unknown declaimer, assisted in all probability by his two friends, Black Jem and the Devil. Then again it appeared that the two last-named worthies were at that moment in course of concealment from the hands justice ; and, altogether, when left to my own reflections, I must acknowledge my anticipation of the future was very far from enviable. In vain I taxed my mind to discover by whom, and for what motive, I was incarcerated ? Who could Black Jem possibly be ? And what on earth could his satanic majesty want with me at this time ? Who the former worthy was I knew no more than Adam—and as for the latter, though well acquainted with him by name, this was the first time I ever heard of his appearance

in a *palpable* and visible form to influence the actions of a living body. Yet, if I heard rightly, I was at that moment not only in the power, but actually in the abode, of the black Gentleman, whose character had not improved in my estimation on hearing he was then hiding from the grasping clutches of the Bow-street officers. In fact it was pretty evident that, be it devil or man who exercised unlimited power over my actions, it was certainly intended to deprive me of liberty, at least; and, for all I knew to the contrary, it might be of life also.

Such disagreeable reflections are far from pleasant companions; and I felt unspeakable relief when, in a short time, I heard the key turn in the lock of my prison door; and my fair gaoler re-appeared, bringing with her a certainly not very palatable description of breakfast: yet, notwithstanding my apprehensions and alarm, I managed to alleviate my hunger in a very visible manner.

Having finished my repast, I again implored to be told the reason of my detention ; but though the voice and manner of my companion evinced much kind feeling and sympathy for my situation, still what little intelligence I could gain was delivered in so cautious and reluctant a manner as plainly betrayed the dread she had of implicating those concerned ; and thereby in all probability ensuring her own destruction.

After much fruitless persuasion it occurred to me that as the door was open, and only a woman preventing my departure, there could not, in the present instance, be any great deviation from the laws of gallantry, were I to attempt as unceremonious an exit as had been my entrance, but this was not so easy of accomplishing ; for, as if my intention was legibly depicted on my countenance, the fair lady instantly took up her original position—assuring me that it was quite useless attempting an escape, as both

my looks and movements indicated; for even were I to force my way to the stair-case, one cry of warning from her voice would immediately summon to her aid far more unfriendly interference than she had already manifested, and was still anxious to bestow. Convinced of the evident probability of the truth of her assertion, I endeavoured to interest her in my behalf; and related all the circumstances connected with my captivity until my senses forsook me in the fray of the previous night. So far from expressing astonishment at my story, she was evidently as well acquainted with it as myself, and indeed far better; as she informed me, when the police rushed in to separate the combatants, I had been carried out by some persons from motives best known to themselves, and deposited where I then was. "However," she added when again about to leave the room, "if you obey my instructions without asking any questions, the

answers to which may implicate others, and cannot benefit you, I will endeavour to release you as soon as it becomes dark—but to attempt to depart now would involve you in certain destruction. At present danger is abroad ; and to this circumstance are you indebted for your safety ; but as soon as the alarm has subsided, so soon must you expect to encounter a far different treatment, if found within these walls. Trust implicitly to me—I have many and weighty reasons why I should strain every nerve to serve you ; and, though a stranger to your remembrance, God knows, I have reason enough to recollect those belonging to you. But enough of this—expect me about twilight, and till then farewell.”

Again was I left to my solitary meditations ; and a most disagreeable occupation it was ; and much I marvelled what had become of my pleasant companion of the previous evening ;

but not for one moment did I allow myself to entertain a doubt of his being the open-hearted, agreeable fellow I had fancied him.

Wearied with pacing the narrow precincts of my den, I at length sat down on the miserable couch; and, weary from the blows received, and the wine I had swallowed over night, I fell fast asleep, and was only disturbed by finding some person pulling violently at what remained of what was once my coat. Springing instantly on my feet, I found, rather by the voice than by ocular demonstration, for it was now nearly dark, that the girl who had visited me twice was now for the third time before me; when desiring me to be silent, and not utter a syllable, she took me by the hand, and together we commenced descending the stairs. This I found no easy matter, and had it not been for the intimate acquaintance of my guide with the adjacent localities, I should have made but one

step to the ground-floor of the mansion, thereby saving those two excellent worthies, Black Jem and the Devil, any further anxiety as to my disposal. Stealthily and in the dark, we groped our way down a broken, creaking stair-case, so narrow as scarcely to admit two persons abreast ; but the bannisters having long since departed from their station, it was a matter of no little danger for even one individual to wind his way down the rotten and greasy steps. Not a light was visible, and not a sound met my ear, until we reached the third landing-place from the top, when I distinguished voices in the distance, and caught the faint ray of a lamp emerging from the obscurity below. In a low whisper, my guide again warned me against the impropriety of speaking, and once more we pursued our way.

We had now reached the bottom of the building, and the spot whence the light issued

was made manifest. Suddenly, my conductor pressed my hand as if to attract my observation; and, following the direction of her gaze, I plainly discovered the figure of a man sitting with his back towards the half open door, near which we were standing, and my astonishment was not a little increased in recognizing, by his costume, my friend of the shaggy coat of the evening before. He was speaking in a thick, indistinct voice, plainly denoting that his ruminations of that evening had not been made over an empty tankard. He was dressed in exactly the same manner as when I saw him before, the only addition to his appearance then being a long clay pipe, which, in the intervals between his attempts at conversation, he endeavoured quite as unsuccessfully to light. In fact he was approaching to a state of intense drunkenness. Who his companion was I had not an opportunity of seeing, as, the door being

but half open, he was completely hidden from my view; and as I glided silently along the uneven passage, closely following my conductor, I felt convinced I had beheld in the person of my shaggy-coated acquaintance, either Black Jem or the Devil. Our progress still continued down lanes of filth and passages of darkness; and more than one court was crossed in our journey, from which, had I not had the protection of my female friend, I much doubt if ever I should have issued. As it was, no one molested us: a few signs of recognition passed between my companion and those we met; and before we completely took leave of those dreary and awful abodes of human wretchedness and guilt, a shawl and bonnet were thrown over her less handsome habiliments, and my fair conductress and myself, issuing from a dark, noisome alley, entered on the centre of a broad, well-lighted street. No time was given me for

exclamations of delight, on finding myself at liberty, for, just as I was raising my voice to call a coach from the neighbouring stand, I was promptly reminded of my promise of silence ; and, putting her arm through mine, she hurried me up one street and down another leaving me as much in doubt as to the localities around as I was when in my dungeon. Thus we continued at a rapid pace, for perhaps nearly an hour, when, stopping before a large illuminated building, to my inexpressible joy I recognized the White Horse Cellar, where not more than thirty hours since I had been deposited by honest Jack Moody.

“There,” said my conductress, pointing to the hotel, “There, if I mistake not, is your present home. I have conducted you out of imminent danger. I have brought you safely to your place of abode, and now farewell.”

“Yet, stay an instant,” I exclaimed, “you

have well and nobly fulfilled your promise ; but let me not be so far outdone in generosity as to leave you without offering some trifling reward for all you have undertaken. Let me but go over to my inn, and I will speedily return, and willingly beg your acceptance of whatever I may be enabled to offer.”

“ Oh ! no ! no ! ” she replied, “ I want no reward beyond the consciousness ‘ of having acted rightly.’ God knows what I have suffered and still must suffer ; I must return instantly, or my absence will be noticed ; and, in all probability, suspicion will fall on me. But, ere I go, listen to my warning, and mark well my words ! There are those who would gladly end your young career, even though it has but just commenced—enemies surround you, and spies dodge your steps—be cautious ! above all, trust to no casual acquaintances—I dare not be more explicit.”

“But why this mystery?” I replied, feeling deeply interested in the young creature, down whose pale face the tears were rapidly stealing. “Why do you not quit that horrible spot I found you in? I have the means and the will also to befriend you—only tell me how I can aid you? And, if within the possibility of my influence, you shall not find me ungrateful. Perhaps you imagine I am boasting of having that in my power which is beyond my reach, but—”

“Far from it,” she replied: “I know but too well each circumstance connected with you, else had I not dared to do that which I have accomplished to-night. Urge me no more,” she continued, perceiving my anxiety to press her further on the subject; “Let it suffice for you to know that it is beyond the power of mortal to aid me. Your prospects are bright, and augur long years of felicity, should you escape

the meshes spread around you. For me there is no hope here, and," added the poor girl in a low desponding tone, "perhaps none hereafter."

A thousand schemes ran through my mind, as I gazed on her beautiful countenance, upturned towards heaven, as though the unfortunate waited in hopes of receiving some mental encouragement which her quivering lip dared not sue for. Many a plan did I propose for her welfare; but, owing to my utter ignorance of the metropolis, all of them must undoubtedly have been romantically absurd, and out of the possibility of achieving.

However unacquainted I might have been with the customs and usages of the great world, wherein I found myself suddenly thrown, I could not be otherwise than sensible of the benefit I had already derived at the hands of my fair friend; and, from the various hints she had thrown out, and the thorough knowledge

which she appeared to possess of what principally concerned myself, I was naturally impressed with a feeling of great interest in her behalf; and, although, when offering all the assistance in my power to befriend her, I was as much in earnest as regarded my anxiety and willingness to save her as I have felt on any occasion during my existence, yet so vague and undefined were my ideas as to the mode in which the object was to be accomplished, that, had my proposal been accepted, I should have been as much at a loss to know what to do, as I was two hours before when locked up in my abominable prison. I was, however, spared the necessity of racking my brains on that score; for in few, but decided, words, I was quickly informed of the determination of my guide to return forthwith whence she came; and though I marvelled much, and loudly, what attraction she could find in so horrible a hole,

it was evident her intention was not to be thwarted, and while I yet endeavoured to stagger her resolution, she quickly slid round the corner, and, instantly mixing with the throng of people on the pathway, was finally lost to my sight.

As for attempting to follow her, that, I was fully convinced, could not be attended with success ; since, had I even been acquainted with the localities, I rightly judged it would be matter of no small difficulty to force my guide to enter Hatchett's against her inclination ; and, to say truth, I felt in anything but a humour for sallying forth on a fresh Quixotic expedition. I therefore prepared to re-enter my temporary abode, and there endeavour to satisfy those pertinacious cravings of hunger with which I had for some hours past been assailed.

Some one has remarked, and most truly, that, dreadful as it may sound, and revolting as it may appear, to record the unromantic circum-

stance of eating, yet the most refined hero of a tale, in common with the menial-minded of the lowest grade, must still be fed. And though I willingly gave myself credit for having, during my short sojourn in town, already figured as the principal in an affair by no means divested of mystery ; nevertheless, when the bandy-legged waiter, who on the previous night evinced such anxiety respecting my luggage placed before me a most substantial supper, flanked on one side by the produce of Messrs. Barclay and Perkins' ingenuity, and on the other by a bottle of excellent claret ; it would have required a great deal of argument before I could have felt convinced that the substantial advantages I saw before me were not of considerable more import than the most romantic epoch of my late adventure.

My supper finished, I gladly retired to rest ; and, notwithstanding the loud snoring of the

watchman—for the London Police had not then commenced their existence, I was speedily carried to the land of forgetfulness, from which region I was not recalled till the sun had made considerable progress in his journey on the following morning.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN seated at breakfast the following morning in my solitary box, the waiter, grinning, I suppose, at the recollection of the woeful plight in which I returned the previous evening, laid a small parcel on the table, directed in a lady's hand-writing. My name was properly spelt; and even the nomenclature of the hotel inscribed beneath. I commenced opening the packet, much marvelling what lady could possibly have occasion to address me; and how my place of abode could already have been discovered; since the only day I had been in town

had passed under the not very hospitable roof of those two respected gentlemen, Black Jem and the Devil. Two or three envelopes surrounded the contents of the parcel; and my delight was fully equal to my astonishment, when, at length, I reached a piece of silver paper, in which, neatly wrapped up, I again beheld my mother's miniature, accompanied by a few lines, the brevity of which, together with the mysterious warning they contained, were any thing but satisfactory. The note ran thus, 'You are surrounded with dangers—trust to no casual acquaintance—avoid strangers,—and leave London as soon as possible.'

Of course, I was at no loss to guess from whom the locket and the warning came; nor could I doubt but the caution was well meant; and, as regarded the assertion of the proximity to danger, I had already experienced ample proof that there was some one or more persons

who, from some unknown motive, thought fit to evince any thing but amicable feelings towards me; but what those motives were, and what the circumstances that gave rise to them, I was totally unenlightened.

In this unenviable position, I bethought me what would be my best mode of proceeding; not feeling in the least inclined to undergo a similar process of initiation to that already experienced.

Pondering over my dilemma, I suddenly remembered my benevolent friend, who had so kindly accompanied me to the theatre, and never doubting but he had called during the previous day, I interrogated the waiter on the point.

“No, sir,” replied he to my enquiries, “No gentleman enquired for you yesterday.”

“No !” repeated I, “that’s very strange ! Do you remember the gentleman who drank three

bottles of claret here the other night with me?"

"Oh! yes, sir, perfectly; and it's down in your bill."

"My bill!" I replied, "what do you put it down in my bill for? the gentleman invited me to partake of the wine, therefore, at all events, place half to his account,—otherwise he'll feel extremely annoyed at it."

"Not he," responded the knight of the napkin, cocking his eye, and sticking his tongue in his right cheek, as he recognised the dirty face of the animal denominated 'the Boots,' grinning through the glass door of the coffee-room, at the Griffin. "Lord! sir," he continued, "don't be such a flat as to come for to go for to think he'd be offended at *that*. Not he, I warrant; besides, sir, the gem'man, as you call him, arn't got no chalk here."

"Why not?" I exclaimed, quite in the dark as to the fellow's meaning; "he told me he had."

“Did he? oh! likely enough, sir;” and again the changer of plates chuckled in a most knowing and satisfactory way to himself.

“Yes;” I replied, getting rather irate, from a sort of instinctive feeling that the brute was laughing *at*, not with, me. “The gentleman said so; and what reason have you for contradicting his assertion?”

“Oh, lord! sir, only because we knows him too well to trust him, that ’s my reason.” And hereupon, with a second significant wink to his friend at the glass door, he forthwith proceeded to snatch up the remnant of my repast; balancing, as none but a tavern waiter can, about three dishes on each arm, and, with the napkin thrown over his shoulder, uttering the cry peculiar to his species of ‘Coming! sir, coming!!’ he left me to the not very pleasing conviction that I had been made, as Jonathan would say, ‘a pretty, considerable, damned, enormous fool of.’

Satisfied in my own mind as to the correctness of the conclusion I had arrived at, and while gazing listlessly out of the window, eschewing my disagreeable reflections, to my great delight, I beheld walking on the opposite side of the street, my old Eton friend and companion, Charles Villiers, who had left that receptacle of wisdom but a few months' back, in exchange for the arduous duties imposed on an Ensign in the Grenadier Guards.

In an instant I reached the door; and, much to the annoyance of divers itinerant venders of oranges and pen-knives, whose daily vocation consisted in pestering, to their uttermost, all locomotive unfortunates, whose destiny drew them to that emporium of vehicles, the White Horse Cellar, I continued the pursuit, till, overtaking my friend, who appeared as much delighted at the meeting as myself, I retraced my steps, and, with Charley Villiers by my side,

was soon again stationed in my wooden stall. Here then, I concluded, would end my difficulties, doubts, and dangers. Who, thought I, can be so fit a person to initiate me in all the mysteries of the metropolis as a dashing young officer of the guards? and, accordingly, I forthwith commenced my narrative, and ended by requesting his assistance in tracing the abode of my fair incognita, whose unaccountable interest in my behalf had created a strong desire for further information.

“Well,” said my friend, who, by the by, was about as ignorant of the world as myself; he having been somewhat less than two months cast loose from the trammels of home, “this is a strange story of yours, Harry; but what seems to me the most singular part is that, having escaped from so infernal a hole, as you represent your prison to have been, you are still anxious to revisit it.”

“I am,” I replied, “most anxious ; for is it not strange that this girl, whom, until yesterday, I never beheld in the whole course of my life, should not only have known every circumstance connected with myself, but should likewise have proved her knowledge to have been equally extensive with regard to my family ? Moreover, I am grateful to her for the kind assistance she afforded me, and am fearful that the poor creature may have suffered ill treatment on that account.”

“As to that,” answered Villiers, “make yourself easy. On the latter score, take my word for it, she wasn’t fool enough to thrust her head into a scrape without being pretty confident as to the mode of getting it out again—if, indeed, she ran any risk whatever—for, my dear fellow,” continued he, assuming a most patronizing and significant look, “I don’t feel quite sure but the whole thing was got up for some sinister purpose,

which, in due time, will develop itself—you are quite sure you were robbed?”

“No mistake there,” I replied; “but whether in that infernal place, where the woman caught fire, or if afterwards, when locked up in the disgusting apartment, it is impossible for me to say.”

“Well,” continued my friend, smiling, “and are you quite sure you were licked, Harry?”

“No mistake there, either,” I responded, as, indeed, my aching bones could well testify; “but come, I suppose, by this time, you know all the mysteries of the metropolis; and, as good luck has thrown you in my way, to you must I look for extrication from my difficulties.”

“All right, Harry,” laughed my jocular companion; “I’ll try what’s to be done; leave it all to me—I doubt not but, sooner or later, we’ll ferret out your Princess of Romance. But suppose we interrogate the waiter as to his knowledge

of your self-invited friend, the claret-drinker?" And, accordingly, that amiable functionary was forthwith summoned, but he either could not, or would not, enlighten us farther than by assuring us that all he knew of the respected individual was from having frequently seen him in the coffee-room, and as frequently heard him accost persons on their arrival; and generally he succeeded in ingratiating himself with strangers, as was the case with my humble self—"but," continued the waiter, "as he has never committed himself in any way when here, my master cannot prevent his coming into the public room, and, though appearances are against him, still there is nothing which we can decidedly allege to his discredit."

No further knowledge to be gained in that quarter, our conversation turned into different channels; until, at length, struck with a new light, the gay Guardsman, assuming an air of

uncontrollable astonishment, exclaimed—"But, my dear fellow, allow me to ask you how, in the name of all that's horrible, did you find your way to such a house as this? And, now I think of it, I only trust to God no one saw me coming in, and, by all that's abominable, here I shall have to wait till dark, for fear of any one seeing me when going out!"

"Why, what's the matter with the place?" I exclaimed, fearful of being contaminated with some horrible disorder. "What do you mean, Villiers?"

"Mean! Why I mean that no one comes here but people who explore foreign countries, such as Fulham, Twickenham, Esher, and so on—and they come in search of the two horse powers which do mightily congregate in these parts."

"Oh!" I replied, laughing, "is that all?" I had begun to fancy myself already inoculated

with some most pestilential fever — for you appeared possessed with such a pious horror of the place. But where shall I go? To what place do you recommend me?”

“Oh! there are ten thousand places to go to preferable to this—I hope it won’t be known you’ve been here—for, gad! I much doubt if your regiment would receive you, if the thing were made public; and none could blame them, either—so the sooner you’re off the better, my boy.”

“With all my heart,” I replied, not a little amused at my friend Charley’s sensibility. “But you don’t tell me where to go to?”

“Go to ‘Steven’s,’ ‘Long’s,’ or the ‘Clarendon.’ ”

“What!” answered I, “all three at once! Surely, one at a time is enough, isn’t it? Suppose I say ‘Steven’s?’ ” And Steven’s accordingly was fixed on.

Little time was requisite for collecting my travelling property, and paying my bill; and it was with no great feeling of regret I left my wooden box in the coffee-room, and prepared to enter the hackney coach that waited for me.

“Come along, Villiers,” I exclaimed, taking him by the arm, “you’ll go with me? Come, jump in;” and forthwith I essayed to urge him forward towards the crazy vehicle waiting to receive us. But no such thing—Villiers seemed to have taken as great an aversion to the four-wheeled conveyance as he had imbibed against the unoffending mansion of entertainment.

“*Me*, get in a jarvey by daylight!” he exclaimed, shrinking back in an agony of distress. “Gad! my dear Harry, you want to ruin me *in toto*. I’d as soon dine with a scavenger as be seen in one of those inventions of Satan in the glare of day. Upon my word, you ask too much; but never mind; I’ll meet you at Steven’s at eight.”

“Not till eight?” I replied; “why what on earth do you mean to do with yourself till then?”

“Stay here, to be sure,” was his reply; “it’s a hundred to one against my escaping without being seen at this time of day; and I confidently trust to your honour not to betray me—I should be done—cut—and ruined, if the club knew it.”

Finding all remonstrance useless, I drove off, leaving the handsome Guardsman grinning through the green Venetian blinds in Hatchett’s coffee-room, something after the fashion of a mouse in a wire cage. And yet this extra refined gentleman, whose sensitive nature was completely unhinged at the bare idea of entering a hackney coach by daylight, was, in a few months afterwards, made honourable mention of for as dashing a display of gallantry as was ever witnessed, when, with a mere handful of men, he endeavoured to capture a couple of French guns at Barrosa, in

which encounter my friend Charley had his arm broken; and the neatest little hole imaginable drilled through his carcass, by the instrumentality of a foreign artist in the shape of a huge French Grenadier.

In brief space, I reached Steven's—and was duly installed in a small, but comfortable apartment: and here let me diverge for one instant from my story, as the occurrences of many a joyous hour passed in that renowned edifice spring to my recollection. Oh! Scott and Freeman—where are now those sounds of festive revelry which in days of yore were wont to echo round your walls? Where, those dear, delicious, indigestible suppers, whose savoury prognostics never failed in summoning their votaries on the Opera nights? And where! oh where! are now the many beings, the absence of any of whom from the festive board was invariably deplored as a far greater misfortune

than would have been by them considered the announcement of a National bankruptcy? And, Freeman, where, oh! where, has gone the famous bin of "Pale, old Port?"

Who is there that cannot remember the eccentric owner of the well appointed team when driving about from place to place, expressing in a most ludicrous manner his grief at the untoward fate of his "poor *diseased* friend"—whose body, after two days' immersion in the Thames, was recognised by the heel of his Hoby boot sticking up at low water mark? And few people of that day can have forgotten the handsome Lancer who diurnally seated himself to dinner with his three Blenheim spaniels; covers being always laid for *four*. Where, indeed, are hundreds more, who, in their time, have strutted their brief hour on *that* stage; but who have long since passed from it for ever? Death,—Clubs, the—and the Bench, could, with but few

exceptions, account for all. And lastly, but not least, let me not forget the thousand excellencies of that Emperor of grills and devil'd bones, Old Turner! Peace to your manes! you, too, have gone from us. And if all the sojourners upon earth were to perform their duties as honestly and conscientiously as you executed the humble trust reposed in you, we should have many better men and—many better waiters.

Punctual to his appointment Charley Villiers made his appearance at eight, having fortunately effected his escape unseen, from the contaminating Hatchett's: and hardly had we commenced an animated and practical discussion on the merits of the various delicacies arranged before us, when the sound of a rapidly approaching carriage met our ears—and in an instant an open landau, with four posters, dashed up to the door.

Immersed in furs, and armed to the teeth

with coats, cloaks, and shawls of various descriptions, two travellers entered the apartment, one of whom, being recognised by Villiers, was speedily introduced by the name, style, and title of Sir Terence O'Darmagh, who, together with his brother cornet, had posted up from their Regiment, with no other apparent purpose than having to undergo the pains and pleasures of an immediate return, for, being, as they affirmed, the only Irishmen, except the Colonel, in the Corps, they declared it to be their fixed intention to return in time for mess, on the following day, with a most praiseworthy determination of doing their utmost in honour of the anniversary of their patron Saint.

Accordingly they proceeded to put in practice this laudable resolution, by ordering fresh horses to be at the door by ten that night. Meanwhile, having divested themselves of their superfluous apparel, they forthwith prepared to make the best use of the short interval allotted to them.

In the days of which I am now writing, the pernicious habit of drinking to excess flourished in all its zenith ; and no where were its votaries to be found in greater numbers than in the army. This may be accounted for in many ways ; but, as I do not profess to inflict my readers with an essay on this abominable vice, accompanied with a catalogue of its many concomitant evils,—I will refrain from diving into the cause, and content myself with stating the effect.

Thank God, the days are gone when, immediately after dinner, the dining-room door was locked, and the key thrown out of window ; when he who could swallow most wine was accounted the best fellow ; and when to refuse placing oneself on a level with a beast was tantamount to a withdrawal from society.

An officer's mess table of the present day, and an officers' mess table some thirty years back, were two very opposite affairs ; and as one

description of the latter may serve as a type of all, I will presently recount the proceedings of the members of this truly gallant Regiment, on the memorable 17th of March, 1813. When, at the pressing solicitations of the two worthy dragoons, we agreed to return with them that night to the head quarters of their Corps; in order that we might aid and abet in the solemnization of the orgies destined to take place the following evening.

Merrily we all sat down together; and though the dragoons took little or no notice of me, notwithstanding the correct Eton tye of my cloth, which I rather flattered myself was as superior to their huge, black counterpanes, as the comfort of Steven's was to my shake-down, in the mansion of Black Jem, the Devil & Co., yet the moment they discovered I was in reality a soldier, and moreover, a *bona fide* gazetted Hussar, every symptom of ceremony vanished;

and in a few minutes I felt as if I had known them for years.

“What’s to be done now?” exclaimed the Baronet, glancing at the ancient clock ensconced in its mahogany frame over the fire-place. “Here we have finished dinner—nothing to do—it’s only nine; and the carriage isn’t ordered till ten. And now I think of it, Holkam, my boy,” he continued addressing his fellow traveller who was busily employed in diving into the mysteries of a long-necked bottle of Chateau Margeaux, “what the devil did you order the horses at ten for? We’ve only one hundred and twenty miles to go; and the devil’s in it if we can’t get down by seven, even should we not start till five.”

“That’s all very well,” responded the gallant veteran of some seventeen or eighteen years’ standing in this fluctuating world, “but remember what the Colonel said, when I told him

we were under the necessity of coming up to town in order to get a proper supply of the *real cratur* for Patrick's day."

"Well, what did he say?" exclaimed Charley Villiers and myself simultaneously.

"Oh, he said," answered the cornet in a low confidential tone, "I've no objection, my dear Holkam, to *your* going any where, but I can't trust Sir Terence without he has some steady going fellow with him."

"Then, how the devil did I get leave?" cried out Sir Terence.

"Simply, my dear Sir," responded the Cornet, "because I promised to accompany you."

"You, indeed," shouted Sir Terence; "Come that is good; but never mind, I'll bet you three to two, in twenties, that you get into some scrape before we leave town yet."

"You will, will you?" replied the other, hugging the huge magnum of claret as a bear

would fondle her cub, “done, most worthy Baronet;” and, forthwith, each pulled out his memorandum book, an article considered indispensable in those days; and down went the bet in due form.

So assiduously did we devote ourselves to the duty of decreasing the weight of the magnum, that it was soon judged indispensibly necessary to summon the veteran Turner to the task of replenishing the vessel; when, on enquiry being made by the Cornet as to the proximity of some spot wherein amusement might be purchased, we discovered that a public masquerade would take place that night; and, accordingly, it was unanimously agreed that our time would be spent far more advantageously in viewing the motley proceedings than in swallowing Freeman’s wine, much to his advantage and our detriment, until the period should arrive for the appearance of the carriage at the door.

As to going to bed, that was an uncertain proceeding, which at this epoch was looked upon as an occasional necessity, but by no means as an indispensable matter of course. So, having finished our wine, and procured dominoes and masks, we sallied out in quest of adventures, and were soon mixing with as crowded and motley a concatenation of mortals as could be found even at the Venetian Carnival.

I have already said that the period of which I am now treating is not of very recent date ; and so greatly have the forms and customs of society changed, within the last few years, that those places of amusement which were wont to be frequented and eagerly sought for by men entitled, and in the fullest sense of the word, to the appellation of gentlemen, are now forsaken and deserted save by a very inferior description of being—one whose ability of procuring admission into any society extends not beyond

that sphere of dissipation where the attention bestowed and the welcome given keep exact pace with the fluctuating state of the visitor's purse, and his readiness in squandering his wealth upon the most vicious and degraded creatures in existence.

Late in the evening, when annoyed by the excessive heat of the rooms, I had retired to a small recess ; and sat watching the antics of a group of buffoons, who seemed anxious to make themselves the most conspicuous party present ; and which distinction—if to be arrived at by an extra superabundance of noise and bad jokes—they decidedly succeeded in attaining. A figure, dressed in the garb of a Carmelite friar, seated himself in a vacant chair next me.

Now it so happens I have always, even up to this day, been imbued with a laudable thirst for information, or what, perchance, some old-fashioned people might denominate curiosity ;

yet, by whatever name this strong inclination for seizing each opportunity of increasing my knowledge may be described, still the feeling remains a predominant one in my nature: and, as my three friends had each departed, bent on their own particular amusements, I thought a good opportunity now offered for gratifying my excited curiosity; and when it is remembered that this was the first time I had witnessed any thing approaching to what was then before my eyes, my anxiety might in this instance be pardoned.

“Pray, Sir,” I commenced, bowing to my neighbour the Friar, “may I request you will inform me what characters those persons now dancing and laughing so boisterously are supposed to represent?”

“Sir?” replied the Carmelite turning quickly round, and eyeing me through the small windows of his mask.

I accordingly repeated the question, my

neighbour all the while gazing fixedly at me ; but his scrutiny seemed to be of little avail, as indeed how could it have been otherwise ? since my mask was intended to represent the back of the head ; and consequently presented nothing but a mass of shaggy, black hair with two small apertures for the purpose of enabling the wearer to see, as if it were, behind him : the Domino likewise was made to fasten in rear, so that in fact, when moving about the room, I had the appearance of a man walking backwards.

“The group concerning which you enquire,” replied he of the sacerdotal habit, “is intended to represent morris - dancers ; but, from the question, may I be permitted to infer I am conversing with a gentleman to whom such scenes as those before us have not as yet lost their novelty ?”

I was on the point of acknowledging my total ignorance in such matters, when the remem-

brance of my anonymous warning checked its utterance; evading the question, therefore, as well as I could, and which the Friar's good breeding prevented him from again urging, we entered into a lengthened conversation, principally respecting the characters who continually passed before us; and regarding most of whom the pious father related many facetious anecdotes, which certainly could not have been gathered in a cloister.

During the time he was speaking, it struck me more than once that the voice was any thing but strange to my ear; but when or where I had before heard it I was wholly at a loss to remember. Again and again I taxed my recollection, but in vain; yet, the more he spoke, the firmer became my conviction that the Friar could not be altogether unknown to me; but as I was then much more on my guard than was my custom, prior to my incar-

cerating adventure, I took care, when endeavouring to discover where we had previously met, not to let drop any hint which could enable my companion to guess who and what I was.

My care and caution on this point appeared quite superfluous, as he neither made any further advance towards elucidating the name and condition of his new acquaintance, nor chose to take any of the numerous hints I threw out as to the gratification he could afford me by casting off his pasteboard rubicund visage.

It was now getting late, and, on my enquiry as to the exact hour, for I momentarily expected a summons from my friends for a preparatory start, the acquiescing carmelite expressed his readiness to ascertain; and, having passed his hand under his capacious, religious garb, he extracted therefrom his elucidation of father Time's movements, and held up to my wonder-

ing eyes, my own gold watch! the gift of my old Guadaloupe uncle, and the identical trinket which vanished from my pocket during my memorable exploits on the previous night.

At first I was so much astonished at the reappearance of my old friend, that I gazed at its well-remembered countenance, without uttering a word; but in an instant my desire to repossess the property overcame my prudence, and, uttering an exclamation not very complimentary to my friend of the religious habit, I made a sudden and somewhat violent spring towards the coveted object. But it does not always follow in this world that right is might; and here, indeed, was a case in point, proving the very reverse: for, quickly darting to one side, the brawny friar eluded my grasp, and at the same time returning with interest the laudatory appellation I had honoured him with, he planted his ghostly fingers against my unfortunate face,

which, considerably shaking my equilibrium, I finally lost my balance, and, in an instant, took a most correct measure of my height and breadth upon the floor.

Smarting with rage and pain, I quickly sprung to my feet, and started in pursuit of the Carmelite, from whom I had suffered so gross an indignity ; but who feeling, as it appeared, perfectly satisfied with the issue of the conflict, had retired from the scene of action immediately on my having assumed my recumbent position.

Nothing discouraged at not finding my antagonist planted before me, and well knowing it were impossible for him to have gained any great distance, off I went, at the very height of my speed, in search, entirely forgetting the absurd figure I must have appeared to the lookers on, who, on beholding a man running from room to room backwards, and with as much

speed as the crowd would allow, instantly gratified themselves with shouts of laughter; while others, taking me for some ingenious professor from Sadler's Wells, followed in my wake; and many, desirous of emulating so useful a talent, forthwith essayed in imitation of the example before them, to run their career backwards likewise. The consequences were easily foreseen by the more quietly disposed, and as quickly brought to pass by those concerned, for two or three dozens of devils, nuns, and harlequins running in every direction, without the benefit of their eyes to guide them, and all being totally reckless of consequences, a scene of confusion, annoyance, and remonstrance was occasioned, terminating in a most uproarious row: but, as in this instance I was in a very different state to that in which I found myself on my previous *melée*, I soon gave up all hope of a reunion with the Friar,

and bent my thoughts as to the adoption of some mode of escape.

At this time the remnants of the supper-table, as if elated at the riot, left their appropriated stations, and commenced a series of evolutions in the air. Fowls, that never again expected to fly, suddenly found themselves on the wing—bottles and glasses were spinning in every direction—the watchmen rushing in—the lights going out—and all was chaos. In one corner, Hamlet's father was fighting like a fiend with a headless King Charles, over a disputed lobster-sallad—Amy Robsart had fainted in the Devil's lap, while Richard the Third and Adam, locked in each others arms, were already *hors de combat* under the table.

As for myself, I found the position in which I was placed anything but gratifying: a huge dragon, whose tail I had unwillingly torn off in the scuffle, was exerting his talons to the utmost

on one side of my poor carcass ; and a humane sister of charity having fixed her dear little teeth in the fleshy part of my arm, sucked at my muscles like a vampire. Meanwhile, some accursed beast, intended to represent a moth—but at least six feet high—worked away at my head with as much good-will and alacrity as his half-pinioned wings would admit of. And, taking the thing for “all in all,” I was in an awful plight indeed.

“Fortune favours the brave,” and in this instance the oppressed ; for had she not speedily arrived to my rescue, I must inevitably have found myself an inmate of the watch-house, which delectable habitation we appeared in a fair way of visiting.

At this instant, when all chance of escape appeared least probable, a Champagne bottle, skimming like a swallow through the air, descended with as much force as if propelled from

a mortar, and sought refuge in the ponderous and extended jaws of my antagonist the dragon, when forcing all his teeth, and at least one third of his face down his throat, the scaly monster uttering a most unearthly groan, dropped senseless beside the already prostrate Richard.

Now was my time; and quickly was the opportunity made use of, for, shaking off the charitable sister in no very delicate manner, I turned all my wrath and muscular strength against the overgrown moth, whose arms being greatly confined by the nature of his dress was of course taken at disadvantage; and, stepping back two or three paces, and projecting my head like the end of a battering ram, covered by my two fists, I charged full tilt against the gigantic insect; and, having fixed upon his well-padded stomach as the point of assault, a breach was instantly effected, and the ponderous fabric levelled with the ground.

Free of my aggressors, my progress to 'Steven's' met with no farther opposition, and there finding my three friends already arrived, we were speedily crossing Westminster Bridge in a hand gallop, through the instrumentality of a guinea a stage to the post-boys.

CHAPTER VI.

THE trumpets were sounding the half hour call before dinner, as our leaders turned into the barrack-yard. And in due time we were all assembled in the reception-room preparatory to commencing the attack on the viands the savoury steam from which announced their rapid approach to the mess-room.

The party consisted of about thirty persons; ten or a dozen of whom, like Villiers and myself, were especially summoned for the occasion, while the remainder was composed of officers of the regiment.

Among the latter, the good-humoured face of the kind-hearted old Colonel shone predominant, notwithstanding the original expression of his mouth had considerably lost somewhat of its pristine placidity, through the effective instrumentality of a sabre-cut received at Assaye. The Major was a short, dark little man, with a head more approximating in similitude to that of a bull-frog than to any thing like a human being; but the clear bright sparkle of the large hazle eye beamed with good-humour, and prognosticated any thing but a dull and clouded imagination. Half a dozen jolly Subs, with two or three captains, the paymaster, quartermaster, adjutant, and surgeon, completed the head-quarter establishment present; and most kindly were we received, and cordially welcomed by all.

Oh! that never-sufficiently-to-be-deprecated quarter of an hour before dinner—more parti-

cularly when, finding yourself one of a party to all of whom, and consequently *by* all of whom, you were previously unknown—whereas *they*, on the contrary, being familiarly acquainted with each other, drop into small groups of threes and fours, and then discuss numberless knotty points connected with their local duties, which, even if addressed to the stranger, would to him have proved wholly unintelligible.

There we stood, anxiously expecting the much-wished-for summons to the feast, when the door flew back on its hinges, and the officiating domestic summoned us to advance—which mandate no one seemed inclined to dispute, till the Colonel, rapidly casting his eye round the circle, exclaimed, “Major, Major, wait an instant—I don’t see your friend here—sure you let him know the hour, and the custom in our service of waiting for no one?”

“He knows it all,” replied the second in

command ; “at least I begged his interpreter fully to explain it ; and, moreover, I caused it to be intimated what sort of an evening’s amusement he might look for.”

“Then I’ll bet ten to one,” chimed in my cornet of the preceding day’s acquaintance, “I’ll bet ten to one he don’t come.”

“Done with you,” cried out Sir Terence, who, on entering the room, had just caught sufficient of the conversation to infer that there was a bet proffered.

“Done !” repeated the other ; and again out flew the before-mentioned pocket-books—down went the bet—and then came a solemn silence.

“Who is this gentleman the Colonel expects ?” demanded I, from a tall pale-faced cornet, all hair and spurs, who, ever since my appearance, had been endeavouring to stick a horse *nolens volens* out of his stable into any

place I chose to denominate mine—"I conclude he is somebody of note, since the whole party are kept waiting dinner for him."

"You may say that," replied my friend of the pallid visage, "since he has done nothing but take notes of all he sees—for not a syllable can he understand of what he hears—since his arrival. In fact, about three days since, a devilish neat dray drove up to the Dolphin, and out shot this Persian, Prussian, Russian, or what the devil he is, and his bear-leader; and, as the Major chanced to have met the latter in Mesopotamia, or St. George's Fields, or some such place, he asked him to dine here to-day, and bring the monster in tow; and, by all that's barbarous," added my informant, gazing out of the window, "here they come." And true enough—for, on following the direction of my friend's gaze, I saw a very neat travelling carriage with post-horses wending its way across

the barrack-yard to the officers' mess-house. Speedily the door again sprung back on its hinges, and the Persian dignitary, Hedak Beg, was announced.

No one, I conclude, is prepared to defend so atrocious a breach of common politeness as bursting into a loud laugh at a man's eccentricities, to his very face, and that man moreover a foreigner. But there *are* cases when the visible muscles take so determined a bias towards breaking through all the acknowledged forms and observances of civilized life that it requires every energy to be put in practice in the endeavour to prevent the committal of so flagrant an insult to propriety.

Here was a case in point ; but, before I enlarge on the most wonderful appearance of the Persian, I may as well let the reader into a few particulars respecting him.

In his own country Hedak Beg was an officer

of trust, who had for years been employed near the person of his sovereign; and in Persia, where heads are not thought of near so much value as pipe-sticks, it was by most people considered as no small proof of the courtier's abilities, that he had for so long a period managed to keep possession of both; but, when the mandate went forth, commanding the favourite forthwith to proceed to England on a mission of importance, the fate of poor Hedak was by his enemies considered as disposed of. Whether their conjectures were right or otherwise will be seen hereafter.

What the real object of his visit to this country was, I know not; but certain it is our Government received the presents and letters, of which he was the bearer, in good part; and afforded every facility for enabling him to visit any place or building in England, which, whether prompted by curiosity or some

more potent reason, he expressed himself desirous of inspecting.

Never did mortal evince greater pleasure at his emancipation from thaldrom than did Hedak Beg, whenever he thought it possible, without detection, to cast off the sombre gravity of the Persian, and enjoy the varied amusements by which he was surrounded. His travelling companion had been by Government appointed to attend him, for the ostensible purpose of affording him aid; and had it not so chanced that, on the evening in question, his Cicerone was seized with some temporary indisposition, which prevented his appearance at dinner, it is very doubtful if he would have allowed his charge to have stalked forth in the extraordinary costume in which he thought fit to exhibit himself.

I have but to add the object of his visit to the town wherein we were about to celebrate the anniversary of Saint Patrick's day was to

inspect the innumerable manufactories with which that place is stifled. And when I affirm the Persian to have been a man about six-and-thirty years of age, dark, handsome, and with a long beard, as commonly worn by his countrymen ; but differing from the pale Cornet's assertion, touching his ignorance of the English language, which, by the bye, was far from being the case, since he could tolerably well understand what was said, and occasionally make himself intelligible ; I think I have put my readers in possession of the leading features of the position occupied by this individual, when he entered the reception-room of the regiment.

I must, however, premise the description of poor Hedak's adventures, by stating him to have been the very essence of good humour itself ; and his great desire to dress and act in every respect similar to the English, while, for some perhaps cogent reason unknown to us, his

guide, the Colonel, threw innumerable obstacles in the way of his achieving this desired object ; and caused him occasionally to bedeck his person in so extraordinary a manner as to make himself an object of astonishment to all beholders.

So much and enough for preface : and now for the Persian himself. Gracefully and with perfect ease he apologized in language somewhat difficult to be comprehended for the absence of his friend ; but, never having had the felicity of dining with the officers of an English regiment, he could not refuse the pleasure this invitation had opened for him. So far, so good : the speech had evidently been concocted by his sick friend, and in due time lodged in the brain of the dusky pupil. The Colonel bowed, and he bowed fu' low, like the Laird of Cockpen in Scottish history ; but as for replying, that was impossible, and had not a second summons to the

table relieved us from the perplexity in which we were placed, I do not think any mortal power could have prevented a general roar of laughter.

On the cranium of the new arrived reposed the usual black lamb's-wool cap invariably worn by his countrymen. A vest of embroidered cashmere, fitting tight to his shape, covered his broad chest; while his outer garment, the sleeves descending to the fingers, and the skirts to the heels, completed, together with the broad shawl round the waist, what would have been his national and somewhat picturesque attire. But not content with his own dress, he must be apparelled like an Englishman; yet, as his sick friend was incapable of aiding, and did not even see him when accoutred, the additions to his costume must have been suggested and acted on by himself.

Imprimis, on the top of the lamb's wool cap

was hoisted a huge cocked hat, fashioned, the Lord knows when, and procured the Lord knows where. Then came, covering the long flowing garment reaching to his heels, and adopted doubtlessly as a compliment to his hosts, a bright scarlet hunting-frock, the buttons bearing impressions of the resemblances of hares, foxes, and every description of brute common to our frigid country. From his girdle was suspended a chain, having affixed to its extremity a bundle of seals, each large enough in all conscience for a warming pan; while, not unmindful of his lower man, the embroidered shawl petticoat was, through some complicated process, drawn up and divided between his legs, in order to display a pair of bran new top-boots, having long brass spurs affixed to the heels thereof.

Such was the extraordinary figure seated exactly opposite to my chair. Yet, though unavoidably the object of astonishment and mirth

to all, he appeared wholly unconscious that he was himself the cause of the often stifled titter, and difficult to be suppressed laugh, which was ready to burst forth from all sides.

The dinner, like most dinners of the kind, was excellent—the Champagne well iced—the Burgundy of the right temperature—the dishes well cooked—every one in good humour; but it was not until after the removal of the cloth that the object for which we met began to develope itself.

Now commenced the evening—the dessert adorned the board—wines of various descriptions in their splendid chrystal vases sparkled on the table—the huge silver Claret jugs were rapidly performing their rotundary motion, while innumerable wax-lights, from their massive sconces, splendidly illuminated the scene.

“Gentlemen,” said the Colonel, rising, “have the kindness to fill your glasses, and allow me to give our first and customary toast—‘th

King ;' accordingly 'the King, the King,' was shouted round the room, and the band in the outer apartment struck up the National Anthem.

No sooner, however, had the first crash of the instruments fallen on the ear, than Hedak Beg started from his seat, and capsizing his next neighbour, a fat old divine, in his hurry, suddenly took to flight as though pursued by a legion of demons ; and much I doubt whether he would have stopped even to this hour, had he not been brought up by his own spurs ; the mode of managing which, being entirely unknown to him, had unwittingly crossed in his hurry, when, his legs becoming entangled, he pitched his bows, like a seventy-four going down head foremost, and carrying the pale Cornet, whom he had seized by the hair in his agony, in his precipitate downfall, gaily they descended together ; Hedak lodging that part of his body over which the skirts of his hunting coat rested in the ice-pail.

Whether his panic was occasioned by the first sound of the music, or whether he suffered inwardly from the effects of the heterogeneous mass of comestibles with which for the preceding two hours he had been gorging himself, I cannot define ; but if it was brought to pass by virtue of the former, his antipathy to martial sounds was not incurable ; for, long before the night was spent, he fixed on the big drum as his own peculiar property ; and much to the annoyance of every one, except himself, he banged away at the senseless sheepskin, as if the fate of nations depended on his exertions.

Every imaginable assistance was promptly afforded the prostrate Oriental, who took his misfortune in far better part than did the pallid Cornet ; whose elaborately dressed head of hair had not improved under the comb of the Persian's digits ; but little attention was paid by any one to his looks of vengeance, though full

opportunity of retaliation presented itself, ere the meeting separated; and which, as will presently be seen, the angry officer did not allow to pass unheeded.

Harmony was now fully restored. "The pious, glorious, and immortal memory," had been washed down the throats of all present, by oceans of claret; and the speech of some of the party was beginning to find utterance in rather indistinct articulation, when the bull-frog-headed Major rose on his legs, and demanded a hearing. Silence having at length been obtained, he commenced his oration:

"Gentlemen," he observed, "since it has been the good fortune of the officers of this regiment, to see around them so brilliant a circle of friends, on a day so dear to that part of the United Kingdoms, of which our gallant chief forms so distinguished an ornament"—Here the Colonel was quite overcome, and the other two

Irish officers taking the cue from their superior, looked most sentimentally drunk. "And," continued the little Major, "as we may not speedily again have the opportunity of numbering so noble a guest among us, as the gallant Persian opposite, I think this a fitting time and place for carrying into effect the resolution I have now the honour to submit to you."

"Bravo! Bravo!" shouted a dozen voices, "Bravo! Major—What is it? What is it?" While, determined not to be backward in contributing his quota of noise, the Persian belaboured the great drum with such awful energy that I heartily wished the performer, sticks and all, at the bottom of his own gulph.

"Simply this," said the Major—"Last week it will be remembered by the officers of the regiment, we were honoured by receiving new standards, the old ones, through long service, having but little claim to the appellation, since

hardly a bit of silk or embroidery remains attached to the staffs. Where those standards have been, and how defended, gentlemen," taking a long pull at a monstrous vase of claret, which he was pleased to denominate his glass, "it does not become me to speak of."

"Speak on! Speak on!"—bellowed all the civilians. "Hear the Major,"—"Bravo!" and every one, in trying to enforce silence, created as much noise as his neighbour.

Quiet having at length been obtained, the Major continued, "My proposition is that the old standards be brought in under proper escort, and received with due honours—that the silk be taken from the staffs—that it be burnt to ashes in the largest silver vessel to be procured—that the jug be then filled to the brim with claret; and finally, that we drink the glorious old standards, bullion, embroidery and all, with nine thousand and ninety times nine."

To describe the scene that ensued would be impossible. The guests waxed as anxious for the *denouement* as the junior officer, who, by the way, having joined about two days, was heard to exclaim something about "death or glory;" when, dropping from his chair, the pale Cornet used him as a footstool, "for the purpose," as he said, "of keeping the damp from his boot-polish." There was an immense deal of shaking hands, and "don't you remembers," among the seniors. Anticipations of warlike deeds animated the breasts of the juniors, while the Persian, having kindly lent one of his drumsticks to the Reverend Divine, who was equally seized with a musical furor; and seeming to look upon his coadjutor in the light of a competitor, rather than as an ally, set to work with redoubled vigour, for fear of being outdone by the clerico.

In the midst of this terrible uproar, in came the old standards, carried by two of the stea-

diest officers they could select ; and followed by the trumpet major and his myrmidons ; the whole of whom, mounting by signal on the table, opened such a din of the oft-repeated “charge,” that even the amateur drummer was for a time silenced. The Major’s proposition was carried into effect — the broken glasses, empty jugs, the junior Cornet, one veterinary surgeon, and two Civilians taken away ; and a short lull in the storm took place.

“Dress the doctor,” called the Colonel to one of the servants leaving the room, who presently returned, bringing on his arm a loose frock or shirt, composed of white calico, and ornamented with innumerable representations of corks, bottles, corkscrews, and the various appliances to boon companionship. In this garb the worthy descendant of *Æsculapius* was quickly invested ; and, when the long-peaked cap embellished with similar devices, adorned his head,

he looked more like a principal performer at an Auto-da-fé than a Christian doctor about to "commence a brew."

Whatever the scene may have been to us strangers, the domestics seemed perfectly accustomed to the proceeding: for, as if they were of opinion that a further libation of cold claret could not fail in producing unpleasant results, every vestige of wine disappeared from the table, but only to be immediately succeeded by all the ingredients for that most carefully to be avoided and destructive beverage, commonly known by the name of champaign-punch.

What the doctor did *not* put in the bowl I cannot tell, but certain I beheld oceans of arrack, green tea, brandy and rum, wending their way to the more sparkling liquid, which, with many an addition to me unknown, were with much care mingled together.

Then commenced loud calls for a song, fol-

lowed by orders for a grill ; both of which appeared in due season. Then came more singing, more grill, more noise, when it was very clear the scene was drawing to its climax.

But the evening was not to pass over without its annoyances, and thus they commenced :—a red-headed, huge-whiskered man at the farther end of the room, had for a long period been eyeing me with the pertinacity of a drunkard's idiotic gaze ; and, having apparently made up his mind that I was the person against whom he had extensive cause of complaint, he boldly accused me, in presence of the whole table, of having grossly insulted him, and called loudly for instant and uncompromising satisfaction.

Such an accusation from a person whom, in the course of my existence, I had never before met with, was not a little startling ; and, on my explaining to the Major, who was the only one, save myself, fully in possession of his senses,

that, prior to that evening, my accuser's existence had been to me a mystery, and, not even then knowing his name, it was impossible that I could have premeditated insulting a man, against whom I could not have imbibed any feeling or opinion whatever, order was at length restored, and my blood-thirsty opponent was fast sinking into that state which would have left him, not only incapable of exercising his anger, but even of expressing his displeasure.

The plot now thickened considerably—the punch had taken horrible effect on the nerves of the Persian, who was bestriding the wretched doctor, he having fallen a victim to his own decoction—and, regardless of his cries, the oriental rammed his spurs ever and anon into the carcass of the physician, and, guiding his head with the never-failing drumstick, deluded himself into the idea that he was riding to heaven on a camel.

Vainly did the man of healing strive to shake off the burden ; for, like the hunch-backed dwarf in the Arabian Nights, there he sat, as if glued to his saddle, until, amid the many evolutions his bibed was unwillingly performing, his eye caught a clouded glimpse of his idol of the night, the drum—resting in the sole and undisputed power of his rival performer. Rage took possession of his reason—his hot blood boiled with indignation at the sight ; and, making a grasp at the drum-stick of his enemy, and at the same moment digging his off spur a good two inches between the ribs of his Bucephalus, he lost his balance ; at which moment, half mad with pain and punch, the doctor pitched his rider some three or four feet in the air, where, making a splendid summerset, intended no doubt for an oriental salam—down he came head-foremost on his favourite instrument ; and, accomplishing with his skull what he had been

unable to effect with his drum-stick, he dived down into the bowels of the monster; leaving his two legs sticking up in the air, like the claws in the centre of a pigeon-pie.

The party had now considerably diminished, and, conjecturing there was but small amusement likely to take place at a later hour, I was proceeding to the door, when the pale Cornet, with whose exuberant locks the Persian guest had in the former part of the evening taken so much liberty, intimated by signal his desire that I should remain; and when, by expressive gestures, I was given to understand the exhibitions for the night were not as yet approximating to a close, I resumed my seat in hopeless resignation of ever effecting my escape.

More cigars—more punch, and, in about half an hour after, when “the small hours,” as the Major expressed it, “were getting out of bed;” the only unconscious beings remaining in the

room consisted of my pugnacious accuser, his head resting on the remains of an omelet, while his body lay embedded in a strata of broken glass. The wounded doctor, more dead than alive, squatted in a corner on an inverted dish-cover, into which he was so wedged as effectually to prevent his rising; and the formerly noisy Persian, now tranquil enough, his black sheepskin head just peeping out of one end of the drum, while his legs jammed close together, and slightly protruding from the other, reminded me strongly of a sluggish tortoise, when, sick and inert, it finds itself cast high and dry, far from its native element. Some three or four officers also remained in the room, and operations were instantly commenced.

The pallid Cornet held a long conversation with his brother in mischief, Sir Terence; between whom it was arranged that the doctor should be disposed of first. So, hoisting him on

the shoulders of two of the servants, they escorted him to his room: the rest of us following, save and except poor Hedak and my antagonist; and, to prevent the danger which either of these worthies might incur by walking in their sleep, my friend, the Cornet, locked the door and carried the key with him.

Arrived at the room of the insensible *Æsculapius*, he was speedily divested of his garments, and comfortably deposited in bed, and here, thought I, he will be left in quiet for the remainder of the night; but, instead of any such termination, three or four urchins, denominated “tigers,” having, by their masters’ orders, fixed strings to almost every piece of furniture in the room, the ends of which they conveyed outside the door, proceeded to moisten with water an immense quantity of gunpowder. This preparation was divided into many heaps, and placed round the victim’s bed; his couch having already

been turned, so that his head rested where in general his feet were accustomed to repose. Nothing now remained but to lay some dry powder as a train, which likewise, with the string, was carried to the doorway, and prolonged underneath, so that the whole might be fired without any person entering the room; last of all, the walls were rubbed with phosphorus; and two of the tigers having, through the roof, attained the outside of the building, were stationed at the doctor's chimney-top with flower-pots and pails of water: all being completed, we withdrew, and proceeded to our other friends.

We found them in the same unconscious state in which we left them; and, thanks to lamp-black and oil—the face and hands of my opponent speedily underwent a transformation from Rouge to Noir; while the unfortunate Persian and himself were unknowingly compelled to exchange garments; so that, in a very short

space of time, poor Hedak Beg was accoutred as an English civilian—his long beard hanging from his chin descriptive of the patriarch, or a Monmouth-street Jew clothes-man; while the other, screwed up in his oriental garb, his black face protruding from underneath his crop of shaggy red hair, looked more like a devil on fire than anything else I could compare him to.

“Now bring up the carriage,” exclaimed the pallid Cornet, he having previously taken care that the driver and domestic should have little power, even if so inclined, to thwart the proceedings. “All right, here it comes,” and, as the vehicle reached the door, driven by Sir Terence’s confidential dependent, and who, he one day afterwards wanted to bet me a cool hundred, was the greatest rascal unhung—the two unconscious victims were then conveyed to the market-place, when the carriage doors having been thrown open, the steps let down, and

the horses taken off—they were left as an exhibition, gratis, for the amusement of all early risers, and market attendants.

The reported success of the poor Persian's adventure was the signal for the recommencement of the doctor's annoyances, and, together, we reached his door. All was silent, save the heavy snore of the slumbering unfortunate, which at intervals came rustling through the key-hole, like the groan of some wretch in extreme agony.

"He's got the night-mare," whispered Sir Terence; "'twill be but common charity to wake him."

"Agreed," said the mischief-loving, pale-faced Sub; and in an instant the train was fired—every article of furniture in the room commenced a gallopade—off went the wet powder, sending its brilliant sparks to the ceiling—bang went the detonating balls mixed with it—down

came a flood of water from the chimney, followed by the crash and breaking of half a dozen flower-pots, sending their fragments over the room.

“Murder! murder!” shrieked the drunken doctor. “The accursed Persian is on me again,” and, turning to the side from which he was wont to descend from his bed, he partly fractured his skull against the solid wall. “Oh! Punch—Persian—Pur—ga—to—ry,” he murmured, and all again was still.

Well, thought I, as I turned into the shake-down prepared for me, I’ve had enough of this work, and please the fates, to-morrow I’ll start for my uncle’s.

CHAPTER VII.

THE reception I met with from the old General was as warm and affectionate as I had every reason to desire; and my delight was much augmented at finding my mother on a visit to my kind relation: nor was my gratification in the least damped by the information that my step-father was detained at Selby on special business.

“Welcome! my boy, welcome!” exclaimed the old gentleman, meeting me at the Hall door. “Glad to see you. Wish you joy, Harry, of your appointment—rather they’d put

you in the Infantry though—never saw any Hussars at Guadaloupe. Sure they were n't there—but never mind, lad; it 's your misfortune, not your fault—they may get there yet. Eh? Who knows? But tell me, when do you join? What leave have you got? Ordered your kit I suppose? Eh? Won't want such a turn out as I had in the Bay of Port Royal in 94? Ah! Those were the times." And in this strain he would have run on till the middle of the next week, if, after many attempts, I had not been enabled to check him with the assurance that I was perfectly satisfied with his Royal Highness's disposal of me. That my leave would expire in ten days,—that I intended to join my Regiment at the expiration of that period; that my kit was all ordered; and finally I fully concurred in opinion with him as to its inferiority, compared to that which was sunk in the Bay of Port Royal; and which, to my certain

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knowledge, the veteran had grappled for, and brought up, at least ten times a week ever since.

“But, Harry, my boy,” continued the General, “go and dress; and don’t spare pains at your toilette: there are those staying in the house well worth any man’s while taking some trouble for; but,” in a low confidential key, “they have’nt half the life the women used to have, in the good old days, when every night we had balls on board the ‘Blanche,’ ‘Quebec,’ or some of the Squadron in Old Jervis’s time. But you know, Harry—one can’t expect such luck to last through life.” And, with a sigh at the remembrance of the last century’s amusements, he betook himself to his dressing-room.

I was slowly ascending the stairs to my own apartment, smiling at the infatuated pertinacity of my uncle in comparing every daily circumstance with the common occurrences of his

favourite epoch,—when I heard the rustling of a female dress close behind me. Instinctively I drew up to allow room for the person to pass,—when, what was my astonishment, as her eyes met mine—on beholding the beautiful, pale face of my deliverer from the unknown regions. Could it be possible? Was I awake? Or, like the Doctor of the preceding night, still suffering from the effects of former imprudencies? but no—there she stood—her finger placed upon her lips as if to command silence—exactly in the same attitude as when she appeared before me in the dungeon. Her dress, however, was far different from that in which I had last seen her: though plain, and without any pretension to display, it was well calculated to set off her admirable figure. Her hair was mostly concealed within her head dress; and the *tout ensemble* of this extremely pretty girl bespoke her as acting in some menial, but not very arduous, capacity.

For an instant struck with astonishment, I remained undecided how to act—not feeling quite certain whether the object before me was in reality a living substance, or merely an ideal figure created by my own disordered brain.

This state of doubt could not last long; so collecting my wandering faculties, and to set the matter finally at rest, I sprung up the few steps which intervened between us, and endeavoured practically to discover whether the vision was an aerial form, or a mere flesh and bone mortal. Quick as I wished my movement to be, my intended captive was much swifter; and, darting off with an almost noiseless step, she fled down the long passage, as if to reach a door that stood half open at the extreme end.

Without pausing to consider whither I might be going, I instantly gave chase; but not so noiselessly as the pursued: for, entirely for-

getting the disturbance my heavy boots would naturally create on the polished oak floor, away I scampered as fast as my legs would convey me, and with sufficient uproar to have alarmed any respectable family.

Now it so happened that this said corridor was of considerable length; and on both sides thereof were numerous doors opening into the bed-rooms and boudoirs of whomsoever might chance to sojourn at the mansion.

Opposite the stair, and at the farther end of this long passage, was, as has already been stated, an apartment similar to those already described; but in the extreme corner, and close to the door, was a baize screen which concealed a flight of steps used by the servants, in their perigrinations from the lower to the upper regions of the building.

Of this secreted communication I was wholly ignorant; and the one lamp, suspended from

the ceiling in the centre of the corridor, tended but little to enlighten me touching the localities; but, beholding the glimmer of a taper at the end of the passage, and conceiving the flying nymph was making thereto for refuge, I redoubled my efforts, in the hope of overtaking her before she could reach her haven.

Away we sped along the corridor; at every step I gained ground; and, when with in two yards of the end of the passage, feeling certain of my prize, I put out my hand to allay her progress; but greatly was I mistaken; for, instantly eluding my grasp, she started with the speed of lightning to my right, and disappeared behind the baize curtain.

It would have been as easy to have stopped a run away steam-engine, on a rail road, as to have made me at that moment deviate from my straight course. To turn was impossible—onward I went; my legs running away with

my reluctant body. For a second a light glimmered before my eyes—indistinctly I beheld a form approach; at the same instant my progress was arrested by the tangible corporeal frame of the Honourable Mrs. Gregory, who, fully dressed for dinner, was in the act of leaving her apartment for the purpose of descending to the drawing-room. So sudden was my appearance, and with such velocity did we meet, that the lady,—as is proper in all similar attacks upon the nervous system,—instantly proceeded to faint.

Here was a dilemma—placed in a position which hundreds would have been but too happy in occupying, I should have only been too thankful had it been possible for me to have sunk into the ground, and hidden my confusion for ever. But as no genii or fabled guardian came to my aid; and as mine is but a story of unadorned facts and incidents related exactly as

they occurred ; I must acknowledge that, at the moment, my feelings were the reverse of enviable ; and I looked like any thing rather than a hero of romance.

Astonished at the noise, the inmates of half a dozen apartments threw open their doors, and inquisitively thrust forth their bodies to ascertain the cause of so unusual a disturbance ; and, certes, if they were astounded before they issued from their boudoirs, they must have been much more so when they discovered me supporting in my arms the beautiful figure of the almost fainting wife of, decidedly, the most jealous man in Europe. This was all bad enough ; and so many having witnessed the result, without knowing the cause of my being in that predicament, I felt pretty certain that many minutes could not elapse without the full account, with innumerable notes and additions, coming to the knowledge of Mr. Gregory, through the kind-

ness of "some dear good-natured friend." But in this instance the "dear, good-natured friend" was saved the trouble: for, rushing from a dressing-room contiguous to that on the threshold of which we were so romantically grouped, appeared the irascible benedict himself; who, with a look indicative of intention to prosecute his further acquaintance with myself, proceeded in a most unceremonious way to relieve me of my burden; and, carrying the lady towards the inner chamber, closed the door of the apartment in my face.

Nothing therefore remained but to retire from the field as unobserved as possible; and which I endeavoured—though fruitlessly—to achieve: for, as the echo of my retreating footsteps sounded along the passage, suppressed laughter and considerable giggling also fell on my ear; which the doors, having been in most cases left ajar—of *course* accidentally—gave in-

dication that a second act of the same farce would ensure an audience fully as numerous.

The scene which I have endeavoured to describe, and which, even in reading, occupies some little time, was enacted during the space of but a few seconds; and from the period when, walking up stairs, I met my fair incognita, to the time when I found myself alone in my chamber, could not have consumed five minutes. But in *those* five minutes events of no small importance to myself had transpired; of the first of which I felt half inclined to doubt the reality; though, but a few moments previous, the very form and features which appeared before me in my prison I had seen and spoken to in my uncle's house. The more I pondered over the mystery, the more was I perplexed. What probable affinity could there exist between the persons with whom I had every reason to believe the girl in some way leagued, and any one of

my uncle's household? And how had it been possible for her to emerge from the state in which, a few days before, I had found her, to the easy and comparatively luxurious situation in which she then stood? That it *was* her whom I had beheld could not be disputed. The same pale, pensive, countenance—the light, elastic step—and, above all, the gesture of admonitory caution—dispelled the supposition of my having been mistaken. Yet to account for her presence in *that* house was to me impracticable; and equally vain would it have been to risk enquiries regarding her, without breaking my former promise of secrecy, which, as she had so earnestly pressed it, I felt little inclination to do.

Then followed the no very agreeable speculation, as to what the resentful expression on Mr. Gregory's countenance might indicate hereafter; nor could I well blame the man for not declaring himself in very friendly terms to the

stranger, in whose arms he found his wife fainting. And, again, what explanation could I give when—as it was natural he would do—I should be called upon? That Mrs. Gregory might have opened her door at the moment I was passing was all probable enough. But surely that was no visible reason why she should have instantly fainted; and still less apparent cause for its being necessary for me to explore the formation of the building, so as to cause the prosecution of my labours being followed up, even to the centre of the lady's apartment—the more so, since I had no business whatever at that end of the corridor.

But even were I to explain the circumstances as they really occurred, what an improbable tale it would appear, unless detracting somewhat from the character of the unknown damsel, or else from my own! Neither was it likely I should add much to my credit, by the avowal

of having pursued a female domestic, evidently against her wish ; and without knowing her name, or the situation she held in the establishment.

The more I thought on the matter, the more complicated my difficulties appeared ; till, hearing the dinner-bell ring, I did, as many a wiser man had done before me, viz.—leave it all to circumstances. And, inwardly cursing all the race, from the inventor of powders to him of the angry visage, I resolved to brave the matter boldly, and take my chance of consequences. Thus determined, I extinguished my candles, descended the staircase, and, assuming what I intended for an air of perfect indifference, leisurely entered the drawing-room.

Fortunately for me, the good old custom of faintly illuminating the room wherein the party congregates previous to dinner was, on this occasion, in full force ; and so indistinct were

the different figures grouped near the fire that, at first, I was unable to distinguish one from another; the consequence of which partial obscurity was a considerable degree of additional self-possession in my own person; so that, by the time we were summoned to the more illuminated apartment, I felt little awe at receiving the significant glances and sly looks which, I fully expected, would be showered on me in profusion—nay, I even fancied that the angry leers of the indignant husband would fall innocuous before my settled indifference.

“Harry,” exclaimed my uncle, to whom my unfortunate adventure was unknown, and who was in the act of escorting a lady to the dining-room, “come, my boy, why don’t you petition for the honour of some fair lady’s notice? eh? The days of gallantry are passed away, with the old 1794—Not correct to be civil now—eh? ’twasn’t so in my time, though; but come along

—Mrs. Gregory,” he continued, “will you patronize him? He’s very shy; but, if any thing can inspire him, never will he meet with a stronger inducement, or a fairer excuse for getting rid of his extreme bashfulness.” And, smiling at his own compliment, the gallant veteran proceeded on his way, leaving the lady whom I had so wofully offended standing by my side, the mere tips of her fingers resting on my coat-sleeve—implying thereby, or, at least, to me seeming to imply, that it was with very great reluctance good breeding compelled her to accept my proffered arm, rather than go through a second scene.

Apparently regardless of her evident aversion, I seized the opportunity to apologize for my unintentional iniquity committed in the corridor: and, though I speedily discovered my listener had prejudged the culprit, I found her not inexorably averse to granting a fairer trial.

The precise words I uttered cannot now be remembered ; but it must have been more from the sincerity of my manner than any reasoning I could have used—for what excuse could I urge in my defence that my handsome companion vouchsafed to extend her pardon ? assuming upon which, I placed myself next to her at table—little heeding the looks of doubt, astonishment, and anger, with which I was frequently favoured by her husband during the repast ; who, with laudable determination to misconstrue every look, word, and gesture that might emanate from his wife,—had contrived to place himself exactly before her ; but which said indication of increasing wrath seemed to have as little effect upon the lady as though her liege lord and master had been venting his anger on some less material matter, a thousand miles away from where he then was. But I have reason to suppose the affair in question not to

have been so completely indifferent as to prevent her having had recourse to that most edifying and delectable of all homilies, the admonition and advice, in which some ladies are habituated to indulge, much to the edification of their better halves,—some twenty or thirty minutes immediately preceding the visit of that inestimable person, Morpheus. Whether, on the evening in question, the lady *did* “just mention the subject,” or whether his totally different course of conduct on the following day had its origin in any other cause, I know not ; but, after that night, and until a certain period, of which more hereafter—we were apparently on the best terms imaginable.

There were about sixteen or eighteen persons at dinner, among whom, I doubt not, there were some ten or a dozen who witnessed the exposé ; and, so anxious are people to discover, and readily account for, reasons influencing the

conduct of individuals — even when the *motives* ascribed to them never existed—that it is not surprising every eye should have been turned on us both when entering the room ; but, on beholding the lady leaning on my arm, and, moreover, seeing me deliberately seat myself by her side, conjecture made way for certainty ; and there was not an individual present—my uncle and his fair daughter excepted—who did not treat the assertion of our never previously having met as a convenient *ruse* to justify us in the eyes of the world—by which world is meant the small coterie amongst whom the inquisitor exists ; including himself as the most important and conspicuous part thereof.

To describe each person of the assembled party would be unnecessary for the development of our story ; but there were a few present with whom it is indispensable the reader should be made somewhat acquainted ; among whom

the lady we have just mentioned stands prominent.

The Honourable Mrs. Gregory was about eight or nine-and-twenty. Handsome, accomplished, and agreeable, she readily found free access into that portion of the *élite* of society which her birth and talents justified her in demanding, and which was willingly acceded. But, in this mercenary globe, there are qualifications which, both in men and women, *are* frequently deemed of far more vital importance than the advantages of birth or the acquirement of accomplishments. And, among these, money — all-conquering money — stands pre-eminent.

Of this “necessary evil,” as it has been termed, the daughter of the late, and sister of the present, Lord Norbert, found herself, at the age of five-and-twenty, painfully deficient; and, with the option of remaining, in some sort,

as a dependant, at her brother's house;—with whose wife, unfortunately, she could not be said to associate *par preference*;—or of retiring to some small, and necessarily obscure, abode, befitting her finances, and thereby entailing the irrecoverable loss of her station in society, and absolute relinquishment of those pleasures and amusements which long habit had taught her to consider as indispensable to her happiness.

When balancing the advantages to be gained and the disagreeables to be endured by adopting one scheme or the other, the necessity of putting either in practice was obviated by the opportune offer, on the part of Mr. Gregory, of his houses, vehicles, and wealth, accompanied with the possession of his own inestimable person.

Such an offer, and at such a period, was not to be rejected; and, in the course of a few

weeks, the honourable Celestine May became the honourable Mrs. Gregory, by disposing of her hand, without her heart having been in the slightest degree consulted.

The husband was one of whom many may be met daily. Rich, from having succeeded to a large property amassed by a clear-headed plodding father in the classic ground of Leeds, he was enabled to command all he wished for; and, consequently, having it in his power to purchase whatever he desired, passed along the vale of life as quietly and unheeded as his similarly circumstanced brethren. His greatest foible was an inordinate devotion to rank; and his greatest crime, a superabundant excess of jealousy. To gratify the former, he would have sold himself to the arch enemy of mankind; and by fostering the latter he was in a fair way of becoming that gentleman's property by a deed of gift gratis, without having received any

value therefor ; unless the sleepless nights and miserable days, which he frequently inflicted on himself, might be considered as payment in kind.

The General, I have already had the felicity of introducing to the reader. But the beauty of his daughter—far worthier of a more powerful description than I can pretend to offer—needs no further eulogium than this—she was unequalled in beauty ; yet the loveliness of her form and features were insignificant, when compared with the mild, angelic purity of her mind. The perfect symmetry of her figure was an appropriate type of the nobleness of soul that dwelt within ; her soft, languishing blue eyes plainly betokened her gentle and affectionate disposition—the delicate ringlets joyously sporting on the unruffled smoothness of the clear transparent brow—the —— but why pursue the picture farther ? Let it suffice,

that in all the notions and ideas of human perfection, either natural or acquired, personal or mental, that man, in the luxuriance of his fancy, has ever called from the regions of romance, wherewith to deck his ideal goddess of perfection; each and all were, as with one accord, centred in the person of my beautiful, accomplished—and, what to the owner, was of far more value than all—good, in the most extensive meaning of the word,—my good cousin, Mary Austin.

She was a being on whom once to look was always to remember; that being, gentle reader, whose slight airy form in the still hour of night, when far, far away from all, whom custom, habit, or affection has made dear to you, has oftentimes appeared, in imagination, to hover round the couch of the wanderer, as a guardian angel may be supposed to watch over and protect an erring mortal;—that figure of which it is im-

possible to give a clear description; but whose every lineament of feature is indelibly impressed on the mind, carrying the recollection through many a dense cloud of sin and sorrow, to one spot—even though it be *but* one small spot amid the wilderness of life's desert, whereon the harried mind rests with an affectionate remembrance, and vividly recalls those few days of innocence and joy against which, in dark array, stand the manifold years of after wickedness!

If there be a man who cannot picture to himself some such angelic vision, gilding, with her pure presence, the happy innocence of his early years—if it be possible that any one exists incapable of reverting with a melancholy pleasure to some such, though alas! short period of felicity—God help him! for, from all chance of awakening other than gross wordly feeling in his bosom, he is irretrievably and for ever cut off.

Yet so it is. And, though strange that it should be so, still, amid the follies and frivolities of life, there are periods when the recollection of those placid days of innocence strikes upon the heart with a clear remembrance of trivial occurrences long past by. And so plainly and distinctly do they appear before us as to cast into comparative darkness the mind's recapitulation of yesterday's pursuits. And in all those reminiscences are indelibly engraven the never-to-be-forgotten features of some joyous and lovely playmate: and, although the tomb may have long since closed its gloomy portals on that which, in the days of our boyish admiration, we regarded as approximating to perfection,—yet neither time, circumstances, nor even a long career of guilt, can cast a shade o'er the vivid colours in which the heart's first attachment is for ever impressed upon the mind.

Where woman is, there must her ascendancy be acknowledged : the very ornaments strewed around her room betray the influence of her presence. Why do the many trifles that deck a lady's boudoir possess a greater interest in our eyes than is allotted to their less favoured brethren? And what attraction do we find in gazing on the many-coloured hues of the soft Persian carpet, were it not to catch a glimpse of the perfect symmetry of the small foot which scarcely presses the velvet surface whereon it rests?

Oh! who is there with heart so dead, who cannot associate the remembrance of some of the brightest moments of his existence with trifles, valueless in themselves, but 'all the world to him.' A book—a flower—a glove, consecrated by the touch of a beloved object, has often served to guide the way, and direct the heart, through many a long year of separa-

tion and sorrow; and often has the one soft silvery voice fallen on the ear, so distinct, so clear, so thrilling, that minutes have elapsed ere the deceitful vision passed away, leaving behind nought but the bitter regret of a second parting.

What society is worth cultivating? What pursuits afford enjoyment? What amusements furnish pleasure — where female loveliness is excluded? None. We have our clubs, 'tis true, where luxury is attainable with as much ease and consequent absence of trouble as Aladdin experienced when building his magnificent palace; but even there, amid all that wealth and luxury can furnish, each member sits gloomily apart from his fellow man, as if fearful of inhaling some infectious atmosphere.

Rational enjoyment where men alone congregate is unattainable. And woman—lovely woman—must still continue, as she has ever

been, the guiding star of man, whether for good or evil.

But what is all this to the purpose? Nothing. And as I find the abominable sentimental fit taking possession of me, in mercy to my readers I'll end my chapter here.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN addition was made to our party next day, by the arrival of Lord Mantar, a young nobleman who frequently did his friends the honour of appearing at their mansions uninvited, fully impressed with the supposition that his person and conversation could not fail in rendering his arrival of incalculable benefit to those on whom he purposed to bestow his society.

We were seated at luncheon, when his carriage drove to the door ; and so accustomed were his lordship's acquaintances to his eccentric habits that few expressions of astonishment

escaped our party on his entrance into the room.

This "noble scion of an illustrious house" had little in his personal appearance whereby to recommend him; and, unprepossessing as was his outward form, the inward man was even less inviting. Selfish, indolent, and extremely narrow-minded, he obeyed each impulse of the moment in prosecuting any plan which his wayward fancy suggested; and, being in possession of both wealth and rank, he found himself flattered and caressed by all who had any object to gain through his instrumentality.

His unsettled disposition and the indulgence of his vaccillating caprice had already cost him a considerable sum.

At Eton and Oxford, he had been everything by turns, and nothing long. Poetry, pugilism, geology, driving, yachting, fiddling, had each in him a short-lived patron. And, on quitting

the Univerity, nothing would satisfy his whimsical spirit but enrolling himself a member of a heavy dragoon regiment, the existence of which first came to his knowledge through the instrumentality of his stud-groom introducing the farrier-major to his stables, in consultation on the case of a favourite quadruped.

Not a month had passed over the head of the youthful warrior, ere he discovered the riding-school a most unexceptionable bore—his drills a decided chaos of unintelligible absurdities—and, above all, the helmet of the heavies considerably inferior in beauty to the chaco of the hussar.

Ceasing to admire was with him commencing to detest; and so rooted an aversion did he take to the corps which, but a few days back, he had eulogized to the skies, that his brother officers saw his exchange to the lights gazetted with as much satisfaction as was felt by his lordship himself.

Here again was he doomed to meet with disappointment, for his regiment being in Ireland, to Ireland he was compelled to go. Leave was of course granted for time sufficient for completing his preliminary arrangements; and the period was consumed with examinations and re-examinations of his pelisse, dolman, and sabertash, with which he found very considerable delight in bedecking his person.

So assiduously did he devote his leisure hours to this laudable occupation, and so thoroughly did he make himself acquainted with every article of dress appertaining to the regiment, that his zeal in the new cause had considerably evaporated before he embarked to join it; nor did he there find objects of more lasting attraction than those which it had been his fate previously to encounter: but let him explain the cause of his short sojourn among them, in his own words.

After the usual greetings and salutations, com-

mon on similar occasions, I was brought under his lordship's notice by a remark hazarded by my uncle that the regiment to which I had just been appointed was the same that a short time previously had numbered Lord Mantar among its members.

“Really?” replied his lordship, drawing out his words slowly and at short intervals, one after another, like a string of camels crossing a desert; and, as if unwilling to suffer his peculiar pronunciation of each syllable to escape notice. “Really? singular! Why, yes, General, I was with them once—fine service truly—blue and gold—rather imposing—good effect. But let me see, I was with them three days I think? Yes, just three days, at a place called——; upon my word I can't remember—if indeed I ever knew what the place was called: but I know its somewhere in Ireland—Eh, you've been in Ireland, General, Eh?”

“Frequently,” replied my uncle; “and for rather a longer period than your lordship, if three days embraced the whole term of your visit.”

“Positively, only three days,” responded the quintessence of foppery. “Could’nt stop longer, positively should have died — no constitution could have recovered after a more protracted sojourn. Oh! heavens,” he continued, emptying a large claret glass, and casting up his eyes, as if fascinated by the gaze of a rattle-snake. “When I recall to my remembrance what I beheld the first morning after my arrival, on approaching the window—now, my dear Mrs. Gregory, what *do* you suppose I saw?”

“Nay,” answered the lady appealed to, “it would be utterly impossible for me to guess what were the sights most likely to meet your gaze in a barrack-yard.”

“True,” resumed his lordship, “it would in-

deed ; well, half suffocated with smoke, and a most distressing smell of turf-fire, I rushed to the window for air, when I beheld before me a trackless extent of bog—not a tree—not a house to be seen—nothing but bog—miles of drear, black, bog. I went to a casement in the rear of the building ; and there I saw bog ; I strained my sight to the right, there was bog—in casting my eyes to the left, there was bog—I looked into a huge box outside my door—it was filled with bog. I turned to the fire-place to warm my frozen limbs—it was piled with bog—the peasants' cottages were built of bog. All, and everything, either looked, tasted, or smelt of bog. Horrible ! most horrible ! Was it not so, Miss Austin ?” addressing my pretty cousin.

“ Not having been one of the party,” was the reply, “ it were impossible for me to give an opinion ; but as you only remained three days, I conclude you found it the reverse of agreeable.”

“Positively not more than three days I assure you, Miss Austin. No man could have remained longer and live.”

“How very dreadful!” exclaimed Mrs. Gregory, in an accent of mock sympathy. “Did the regiment follow your Lordship’s example, or did they die?”

“Why no—not exactly—that is,” continued Lord Mantar, “I cannot say to a certainty; because I never went back to ascertain, as you may believe; consequently that is a point upon which I cannot stake my veracity; but, short as my campaign was—truly it was a very severe one.”

“How so?” asked the General. “I remember, in 1794, when Sir John Jervis—”

“Pardon me my dear Sir,” interrupted his guest—the Guadaloupe story being no greater novelty to him than to others of the party present. “Pardon me, my dear General, I was

just going to explain the cause of my departure from that dreadful place; and, ladies, if it will afford you any amusement, I shall be delighted in recounting the extraordinary circumstance which led to my withdrawal from the service."

Here the Baron waved his cambric handkerchief across his brow—scenting the room as though all the bottles in Delcroix' shop had been there poured out for the purpose; the ladies having meanwhile acceded to his proposal—the noble ex-soldier thus continued :

"The labour and exertion, both mental and bodily, which I underwent, during the period I was with the regiment, are scarcely credible; and, having unfortunately joined from another corps, I was pronounced eligible for torture; and immediately placed on duty. And then the *still-hunting*, I think they called it—though God knows it was any thing but still—there was I

riding all night wet to the skin over one of their never ending bogs, in search of whiskey, which was of course said to be found in the bog—Oh! never shall I forget the misery of that night's work!" Here he heaved a profound sigh, intended doubtlessly to excite commiseration; but which sounded in my ears more like the noise that accompanies the escape of steam through the safety valve of an engine than any thing else.

"Pray enlighten us;" exclaimed several at once. "It must have been a splendid sight to have seen your lordship on a bleak bog—drizzling rain—wet through—pitch dark—with all the *et ceteras* of comfort;" added Mrs. Gregory in an ironical tone of compassion, in which however, the lady did not succeed in deceiving the sufferer.

"I can assure you," replied he, rather piqued, "it was any thing but a laughable matter, as

you shall presently discover. Thus, then, you must know, ladies, that, on the second night subsequent to my arrival on this bog, I was seated sadly and mournfully looking at my turf fire, when the adjutant of the regiment—you know what an adjutant is, Miss Austin, I presume?”

“Oh perfectly,” was the reply; “Papa has often seen them in India.”

“Frequently, my dear,” chuckled the veteran; “but I rather think you do not comprehend the description of Adjutant Lord Mantar alludes to.”

“Oh, yes!” she rejoined, “I am perfectly conversant with *its* description—long legged—scanty plumage—generally found near barracks, markets—bazaars,—and dirty places.”

“Bravo!” chirped his Lordship; his laugh much resembling the shrill squeak of a parrot in fits. “Very good indeed: but it was not

exactly that description of animal that paid me a visit,—*but* an officer of the regiment ; whose duty, as far as I could learn, consists in sleeping in his clothes so as to be ready, at a moment's notice, to run about the barracks carrying disagreeable messages. Now, it so happened that this gentleman was particularly complaisant and urbane in all his official duties : and in his usual civil style he proceeded to inform me that I was instantly to march in command of a party in quest of a still. There was something so absurd in the proposition that, miserable and unhappy as I was, I could not refrain from laughter ; in which hilarity my long-legged friend in office cordially joined. ‘ Very good joke indeed, sir,’ I replied, endeavouring to suppress my mirth—‘ very good, indeed ; truly, sir, we need some pleasantries among ourselves to wile away the time :’ and instantly I offered him a chair ; and desired my

Italian valet to produce liqueurs. 'I am glad you like it, my Lord,' replied my tormentor, seating himself and swallowing half a tumbler of *parfait amour*, 'but there is no time to be lost. Allow me to recommend your adding some warmer addition to your dress, for it is raining torrents; and I know the bog well where in all probability the gauger will take you.' 'You're very kind, sir,' I replied; 'but feeling more comfortable here than in all probability I should be on any bog, I have not the most remote intention of moving.' 'Let me remind you,' cried my persecutor sipping his liqueur, 'that the men are waiting mounted, in the barrack yard; and your horse is at the door.' 'My horse at the door!' I exclaimed, 'this is carrying the joke too far. What can you mean, sir?' 'Just what I have already said,' was his reply. 'Nothing more nor less than, your horse being at the door, the sooner

you mount the better for all parties,' and here-upon the gallant adjutant replenished his glass and deliberately proceeded to light a cigar. 'Now this was beyond all bearing. To be ordered here and there, at the pleasure of another person, was bad enough; but to be sent out to look for a still, — without the most remote notion as to what a *still* was, or where to be found,—was preposterous indeed. So I plainly informed my officious companion that I would not go."

"I fancy your Lordship would have thought twice on the subject, before sending such a message as that to Dundas," exclaimed my uncle, quite horrified at the enormity of the insubordination. "Why, I remember an officer in the year 1794, who was—"

"Oh, yes, my dear General," cried Mrs. Gregory, "I recollect your mentioning it. But what occurred afterwards, Lord Mantar?" she

added, addressing the perfumed baron. "You said you would *not* go."

"Certainly not. How could they expect such a thing?" he replied.

"Did you carry your point then?" chimed in my uncle, quite distressed at the possibility of such flagrant iniquity being successful.

"Why—yes—no—not exactly. They appeared to make a point of the thing: and it's so disagreeable, you know, to thwart a person."

"Even when they've set their hearts on sending you out still-hunting, on a wet night," said Mrs. Gregory. "But were you successful? Did you take anything?"

"I took cold—and next day took myself off: and never stopped till I reached town—and I think," he added in conclusion, "there is very little chance of my ever going back again."

Thus ended the account of his lordship's misfortunes : and as we finished our lunch at the same period, the party broke up, and proceeded on their different amusements.

CHAPTER IX.

THE period was fast approaching when it would be necessary for me to start for the head quarters of my regiment. Yet, amid the incessant gaiety of the old General's abode, I found many opportunities for holding long and interesting dialogues with my mother. So far from being the gay, lively creature I remembered in the days of my childhood, she had grown silent and melancholy, as if continually brooding over the fear of impending calamity. It is true that the mention of her husband was ever unaccompanied by the slightest intimation that he was

to her an object of aversion rather than affection: and never did I hear, breathed from her lips, any thing that, by possibility, could be construed as tending to convey censure of his conduct towards her; but whenever the name of Sir Frederick Distowe was repeated in her presence, the unconscious start, and deadly paleness that immediately overspread her countenance, gave but too sure indication of the misery hidden within her bosom.

To my repeated and earnest enquiries whether there was any earthly thing, within my power to accomplish, which might in the slightest manner relieve her distress, I was invariably answered in the negative; and in a short time, as if by mutual consent, recurrence to my step-father, or his proceedings, was never made by either of us, until a very few days preceding the expiration of my leave, when my uncle suggested the propriety of my visiting

him at Selby, even were it but for a few hours; and my mother acquiescing in the advice, I promised their request should be complied with.

The evening prior to my intended departure, on entering my apartment shortly before dinner, I discovered a small billet lying on the toilet; and my glance at the superscription convinced me it was not the first I had received in the same hand-writing; and, like its predecessor, the tenor thereof was as laconic as could be wished:

“If,” said the scrap of paper, “you are anxious to know more on the subject of which the writer last spoke to you, be in the shrubbery near the Druid oak to-morrow morning by seven.”

Now, thought I, the mystery is about to be unravelled; and I shall at length be made acquainted with the history of this extraordinary

creature : and, highly elated at the anticipation of the morrow's appointment, I joined the party in the dining-room, and enjoyed more amusement from Lord Mantar's insipid drawling conversation than I had hitherto derived from that source.

Mrs. Gregory and myself had, by this time, become great friends ; and often and strongly had I been pressed by the husband to spend some period of the approaching London season with them in town. An invitation, by the by, to which I most willingly assented, provided I was enabled to effect the desired pleasure.

My uncle was particularly facetious this evening : his baggage was fished up, from the bottom of the bay of Port Royal, three distinct times between the first course and the dessert. And poor General Collet evacuated Guadaloupe—carrying with him all the honours of war, twice between dinner and coffee. The memor-

able campaign having therefore terminated so favourably, he could not fail to display even an unusual degree of spirits ; and ever and anon, between his oft-repeated anecdotes, the old gentleman would favour me with minute instructions as to my future conduct, and the best mode of acquiring a knowledge, and performing the various duties, of my profession, which, although well meant and kindly intended, had as much to do with the system and customs of the present day as with the military evolutions performed by Pharaoh when he marched his army to the Red Sea.

To me it appeared that, on this evening, Mary Austin sang more sweetly than ever ; and, as I sat in a secluded and distant part of the room, gazing on the many happy faces beaming with animation, a feeling somewhat akin to sadness crept over me, as the question rose to my mind, “ Shall I ever again behold even one of the

familiar forms now standing around?" and greatly were the chances against it.

I had chosen a profession which I was imperiously called upon to embrace in a few days. British troops were almost hourly embarking for Lisbon and Oporto; the preceding year had witnessed the fall of Ciudad-Rodrigo, and Badajos; the battle of Salamanca had been fought, and the dreadful retreat from Burgos effected. The splendid branch of the service to which I was appointed had proved their gallantry at Villa-Garcia, Llerena, St. Christoval, and La Serna. The British army was at that moment reposing in cantonments at Baños and Lanego, ready to commence a new campaign; and the regiment to which I had the honour to belong was in daily expectation of receiving orders for embarkation. But what there might have been of melancholy in my cogitations, as the long list of killed and wounded of the pre-

ceding year rose up before me, was speedily annihilated by one of those youthful visions of honour, glory, charging squadrons, floating banners, clang of trumpets, blaze of beauty, and all the numerous appendages to a boy's fancy, when first entering on life. Dull, cold reality finds little space amid the romantic and never-to-be-fulfilled ideal splendours continually re-occupying the place of common sense in his calculations of the future. That night I laid my head on the pillow with a feeling of buoyant happiness and prospective honours innumerable; and I rose to keep the appointment in the morning, without having been again troubled by a re-appearance of the 'List of killed and wounded' night-mare.

The spot which my fair friend had fixed upon as our 'trysting place' was but a short distance from the house, and sometimes frequented, during the extreme heat of summer, as a de-

lightful place whereat to effect that most uncomfortable of all meals, called in England, a pic-nic; to achieve which, people leave their substantial homes and all the numerous luxuries contained therein,—and for what? To sit on wet grass, thereby probably ensuring their deaths, for the gratification of eating a bad dinner with their fingers, and exclaiming between every tough morsel,—“How charming! How delightfully rural!”

Nevertheless, the situation fixed on was extremely beautiful. It was a small plot of soft green velvet turf, surrounded at some little distance by a profusion of the choicest flowers and evergreens procurable; while further in the back ground a dense foliage of numberless giant oaks spread out their graceful branches, as if to protect the delicate exotics within the circle of their belt.

From one side of this fairy spot, a small

stream, bubbling from a clear cool spring, flowed, with a soft murmuring sound, into a white marble vase placed to receive it ; and, in the centre of the whole, stood the remains of an ancient denizen of the forest, from which, for some unknown, though probably sage, reason, the small garden had been named “The Shrubbery of the Druid Oak.”

Such was the place on the morning in question ; and truly a more fitting spot for the disclosure of mysterious romance, or the soft whispers of plighted troth, could not easily have been selected : and so sad and still—broken only by the slender spring—has to me ever appeared that lonely retreat that I confess I have seldom been tempted to visit it for pleasure. The old oak, blasted and withered, in the midst of the soft, delicate plants and stately trees, expanding their many tinted foliage in all the luxuriance of beauty, is a contrast

which has always appeared so strikingly great as almost to sanction the belief of some awful orgies having been there perpetrated, the horrors of which recent generations have been spared the knowledge of.

Such were my thoughts at that moment, when a slight rustling amid the leaves recalled me from the reverie, and again my lovely preserver stood before me.

“Had I not judged it highly improbable that we might ever meet again,” abruptly commenced my companion, “I should not have taken the liberty of requesting this interview: but, knowing your intention of starting for Selby this day, and fully impressed with the conviction that, in order to benefit you, the communication I have to make should not be further delayed—I have ventured on a step which, if known, would assuredly involve me in perhaps inextricable difficulty; but on your

promise of secrecy I am confident I can implicitly rely."

"I am already too much beholden to your aid," I replied, "willingly to be the cause, however unintentional, of placing you in any awkward predicament; and much and deeply have I already regretted the exposé I might have made on the first evening of my arrival here; but so unexpected, and so extraordinary, did your presence, at that instant, appear, that I acted on the immediate impulse of the moment, without waiting the admonition of my calmer judgment. Wrong, I know, I certainly was; but, believe me, the endeavour to prevent your escape, without having uttered a syllable in explanation of the apparent mystery, took its rise from a far different and better feeling than would have been awarded me by others, had you not been able to have effected your departure before you were discovered—I therefore trust I may be forgiven?"

“Name it not,” answered my friend; “but beware of any attempt to speak to me, or endeavour to attract my attention in the presence of others, should it be possible that we meet again. The very circumstance of my holding the situation in which I am now placed may, with God’s help, make me the feeble instrument of rescuing the innocent, and averting crime from the already deeply-stained sinner; but, should it be known by those whose interest it is to watch your steps that I have other than hostile feelings in my bosom towards you and yours, I should speedily be removed to some distant place, where my intentions, unsupported by the power of action, must cease to benefit your cause.”

“Tell me, I implore you,” I answered greatly interested at every syllable she uttered, “in Heaven’s name, tell me who you are? How came you into this house? And in what possible

way can you have power of extending good or sanctioning evil towards any of my family?"

"To your first question," she replied, with a faint smile, "I decline giving any reply—who I *am* matters little now to any but myself—but what I *have* been I would willingly recal, even if instant dissolution were the price demanded. But a very short period back, like you, I had health and happiness as my constant companions—sorrow was to me as a repeated tale, interesting in narration; but never did I dream it could one day be made so bitterly applicable to my own case—never, oh, never! could I imagine that a story of fictitious woe, with its highly-wrought colouring, created by some fertile imagination, and, which, during the narration, I had wept over, and then thanked God it was but ideal—never could I have foreseen that those tales of supposed sorrow would, at a future period, fall immeasurably short in

misery of the awful reality of my after days of agony and sorrow! Ah! Mr. Austin," she continued, the bright tears silently, though swiftly, chasing each other down her pale, yet lovely, countenance, "many have known misery who were bred in luxury and joy—many have, in an instant fallen from the bright and heavenly path of innocence to a state of endless self-reproach and irremediable remorse; but few, I trust, have, like me, been cast, as it were, from, comparatively, the summit of earthly enjoyment, down into that dark abyss of shame and anguish where, entangled by the many meshes that enchain me, I feel the utter hopelessness of escape."

Here the poor girl's sobs became painfully distressing; and, had I not instantly supported her, she must have fallen. To procure some water from the little spring was soon achieved; when, finding herself somewhat relieved, with

a violent effort she appeared to master her more painful feelings, and, in a few seconds, continued—

“ Degraded as I must be in your estimation, how much more so shall I appear when I confess the position in which I am placed in your family—a position which God, who reads the hearts of all, well knows worlds would not tempt me to occupy, did not my heart plainly presage that, some day, it may be in my power materially to serve those whose conduct I am now directed to watch over for, I much fear, diametrically opposite reasons—I am placed in your family as a—spy !”

“ By whom ?” I exclaimed ; “ for what purpose ?”

“ By whom,” was the reply, “ I dare not say ; and for what purpose I have only vague, yet, in my mind, not less certain, surmises ; but of this rest assured, their intentions bode you no good.”

“Oh, why not be more explicit?” I replied, “if there is positive danger, why not point out the quarter whence I may expect it, so as to be on my guard at least? Why do not you at once reveal the authors of the intended evil? And should danger threaten you on account of the disclosure, my uncle will undoubtedly be most willing, as well as able, to shield you from its effects. Tell me,” I exclaimed with eagerness, and pressing her cold hand within mine, as a sudden remembrance of my step-father’s dislike shot through my brain, “tell me, I implore you, is Sir Frederick Distowe in any way implicated as the author of the threatened calamity?”

“Sir Frederick,” almost screamed my companion, “for the love of mercy name him not—there is a secret—a dreadful, horrid secret, connected with that name, which to utter would hurl down many to destruction, and from *my* lips it can never — never come.” And the

wretched girl gazed fearfully around, as though she apprehended some dreaded apparition might start up before her.

It was in vain I endeavoured to calm her mind ; I had unwittingly touched a chord which responded so fearfully that I almost doubted whether her senses had not forsaken her.

“Forgive me,” I exclaimed, “for having occasioned you so much pain ; and much and naturally anxious as I am to learn more on this, to me, most interesting subject, nevertheless, rather than see you suffer as your manner too legibly demonstrates, I intreat you to forego a conversation which so greatly agitates you ; and, perhaps when you are more calm, you will communicate by writing whatever you may be enabled to apprise me of?”

“That will be impossible,” was her reply ; “letters may miscarry, and, if indeed I should be able to dispatch one to you unknown to

others, it would be out of the question to suppose it probable for me to receive a reply with similar secresy. No, I cannot write without almost certain detection; and I have already told you what the result would be were it but for an instant conjectured I was unwilling to play the mean, infamous part assigned me."

"Then we must part, I suppose," was my answer, "without any farther elucidation of the mysterious warning than that danger pursues me, but from what quarter, or for what reason, I must still remain ignorant. Is this your final determination?"

"Of one person I *can* warn you," answered my companion, "and that person is the individual who met you on your first arrival in London. Beware of his acquaintance—should you meet again, watch his every word and action respecting you, with jealousy and caution—and with the full certainty that, if in his power

to accomplish it, he has the inclination to work you evil."

"But who is he?" I exclaimed, interrupting her—"what motive can influence him against a stranger?"

"No! no!" she replied, "you are no stranger, believe me — weigh well, and ponder on my words — trust to the sincerity of my good intentions towards you; but, should discovery await me, regret for having sacrificed myself to ensure your happiness will never haunt my bosom; but the hour has come when we must part, and perhaps for ever—farewell!" and extending her small hand in token of friendship, I was on the point of accepting the proffered kindness when, uttering a low expression of sudden alarm, she darted into the shrubbery and was immediately out of sight.

Instantly I turned my head to discover the cause of so sudden a departure; and to my

inexpressible annoyance, standing within two yards of me, I beheld that most consummate of all empty-headed dandies, Lord Mantar.

“’Pon my honour,” he commenced, “had I the most remote conception of the possibility that my appearance should have proved so *contre-temps*, I assure you my dear, Mr. Austin, I would rather have sacrificed my possessions than have presented myself at so *mal à propos* a period. But I will instantly retire—Gad,” he continued, examining the spot through the medium of a splendidly chased eye-glass, but, without offering to move one inch from where he stood, “I really must give you credit for your selection of the *locale*—the very spot for an *affaire de cœur* ; but, i’faith, I am truly sorry I drove away Mrs. Gregory.”

“Mrs. Gregory !” I responded, in a tone of surprise.

“Egad ! my dear friend,” was the answer,

“was it not Mrs. Gregory who fled at my approach? But no matter, of course it was *not* then—oh, no, now I remember, it could not have been—oh, no, impossible!”

“Lord Mantar,” said I, not a little delighted to discover his ignorance as to whom my companion had been, yet determined at the same time to check his impertinence, “no apology is due to me from your having chosen a walk in my uncle’s grounds, which are invariably accessible to his visitors; neither have I a right to complain of your unseasonable appearance; for, unseasonable I allow it to have been, whether accidental or premeditated. The person I have just parted from was the bearer of information of considerable importance to myself, and wholly unconnected with your lordship. That person, however, I feel bound to state was *not* the lady whose name you had just been pleased to utter. Who the person was is a matter that

concerns not you in any degree whatever : but this much I may inform you, respecting your second supposition of the meeting having had for its object the indulgence of an *affaire de cœur*, that you are in that instance as greatly in error as in the former one ; yet, from circumstances unnecessary to repeat, you will greatly oblige me by retaining the occurrences of this morning in your own breast ; for should you reveal what accident, I presume, has made you acquainted with, it may occasion much inconvenience and probably distress."

"Doubt me not, my dear friend," was his reply, "not one iota of this assignation with Mrs. ———, I beg your pardon—I mean, that not a syllable regarding this accidental *rencontre* shall pass my lips, since such is your desire." And, taking off his peculiarly shaped hat, the introduction of which into fashion had bestowed upon him a yet not forgotten *sobriquet*, with an

idiotic grin, intended, like Lord Burleigh's shake of the head, to convey volumes of meaning—the ex-hussar glided from my path to acquaint the first listener he could obtain with a full and improved detail of all he had, and all he had not, that day witnessed.

On entering the breakfast-room, it was soon made manifest how the noble baron had kept my secret; for the covert insinuations, with which I was regaled, were showered with a lavish disregard of economy; and, though the hints and inuendoes thrown out were not immediately directed *to* me, there could be no mistake but that some, at least, were aimed *at* me.

This was all very annoying, the more so as my kind old uncle looked in no way gratified: and, to do him justice, he exerted himself to the utmost in again fishing up his baggage in the Bay of Port Royal, where I supposed it had

been once more sunk during the night, but no one seemed interested in the detail.

There were many opportunities offered for explanation, had I wished to give any ; but not choosing to reveal the true state of the case, and being equally unprepared to retort in the same style of *badinage*, my silence sanctioned the supposition that there was something to conceal ; which impression on the minds of the party, and of the ladies in particular, did not tend to a suspension of their variously directed attacks for information. But what vexed me most was the half-sorrowful, half-reproachful look I encountered from my cousin Mary. Amid the amusement consequent on the numerous witticisms passed on the occasion, Mary appeared unconscious of the merriment, or ignorant of the cause that gave rise to it. Perhaps she thought that, had I not been engaged in some transaction not very creditable, where

would have been the advantage of preserving the unbroken silence with which I received the sallies of the company? Where there is mystery, there must be reserve, and, though it does not follow that, in every instance of the latter, guilt must necessarily be the cause of it, yet, to a young and ingenuous mind, there is always a feeling connected with subterfuge and aversion not very favourable to those who adopt them.

Such was the impression on my cousin's mind when I bade her farewell; for, although she pressed my hand at parting, and uttered her "Good bye, Harry," in the kind, soft, musical tone so peculiarly her own, still I fancied the affectionate warmth of feeling which I had before experienced, in her manner, had given place to a colder and more distant demeanour.

Not for the universe would I have sacrificed one particle of Mary's good opinion; but, how was it possible I could explain all the circum-

stances of my acquaintance with my unknown friend, without breaking the promise I had so seriously given? Neither was a young and inexperienced girl exactly the person best fitted to enact the part of confidante in so delicate, and still mysterious, an affair; therefore, seeing no help for it, and the carriage being at the door, I bade adieu to the party, leaving them to discuss the matter as in their separate wisdoms might seem proper.

CHAPTER X.

“WHERE shall I drive to, sir?” enquired the post-boy, checking his horses as the carriage entered Wantage :—“ Good horses at ‘the George,’ sir?”

“Then drive to ‘the George,’” I replied, little caring to what house he took me, provided it facilitated my progress along the road.

In went the spurs, and away flew the vehicle, in imitation of the system pursued in the sister kingdom of “keeping a trot for the avenue :” for, squaring his elbows, and at the same time judging his distance with the greatest nicety,

my charioteer pulled short up at the door, causing a noise and confusion as though he had been for the last two hours urging his steeds, as if engaged in a matter of life and death.

“Please to alight, sir?”—and the officious waiter, opening the carriage door, had the steps down in an instant, whether I wished to descend or not; but, not caring to disappoint this worthy member of the napkin, I left my moveable mansion, when whose lugubrious countenance should I espy louing over the blinds of the parlour window, but the not-to-be-mistaken visage of Hedak Beg?

But how unlike the joyous Oriental whom I had seen spurring the panting Doctor round the mess-table! No smile irradiated his countenance—pleasure with him appeared to have lost her sweets,—his large eyes were sunk in their sockets; and his very beard had lost the brilliant jet, once the envy and admiration of all Ispahan.

The sound of the carriage-wheels driving to the door in some measure recalled him to recollection ; and, on recognising me, a faint, sickly smile, for an instant, partially lighted up his handsome features.

What could have caused so great an alteration in so short a period? my curiosity was excited ; and, anxious to probe the mystery, if indeed any existed, I sent in my card, requesting permission to call on him. Instantly I received a reply in the affirmative, and, entering the parlour, Hedak Beg greeted me with great apparent warmth and sincerity.

So obviously had care or disease laid its destroying fingers on the poor Persian that I involuntarily enquired what had happened to discompose him? when, immediately drawing his forefinger across his throat, I was given to understand either that he had perpetrated murder, or that the ceremony of extinction was to

be practised on himself. This pantomimic performance was accompanied with such groans as would have moved the heart of a master chimney-sweep ; while the faces he made, indicative of his distress, must have carried the horse-collar prize, by general acclamation, at any fair in the kingdom.

His instructor, or protector, or whatever he might have been, who accompanied him at Norwich, was not now with him ; neither was there much occasion for his services, for so diligent and unremitting had been the Persian's attention to the study of our language that he was now fully competent to wander through England, divested of the persecutions of a Cicerone.

Having seen the wonderful effect a couple of bottles of claret once had on the spirits of the Oriental, I recurred to it as a remedy which might possibly be advantageously administered

in the present case ; therefore, desiring lunch to be brought, I besought my afflicted companion to join in its demolition. At first, he appeared but little inclined to gratify his own appetite, or my curiosity ; but, as he proceeded in his repast, his sobs became less audible, while his tongue relaxed from its silence, and, before the remnants of our *déjeûné* disappeared, Hedak made me acquainted with the following cause of his present wretchedness ; but, as the language he pressed into his service might not be quite intelligible on paper, I will take the liberty of repeating the substance in my own words.

It has been previously stated that this worthy individual was despatched from his own court, to England, on some secret or important mission ; but what that might have been none, save those to whom he was referred, had any opportunity of discovering. That it was friendly, however, to our Government, the

presents of which he was the bearer sufficiently testified ; while the attention bestowed, and facility afforded for his untiring visitations to all things and places worthy of encounter, denoted him as no unwelcome visitor.

Time sped gaily on : with all he saw, and every thing he heard, the Persian was enchanted. As a novelty he was sought and caressed, as all novelties *are* sought after and admired, whenever they condescend to visit our shores for the purpose of gulling that most gullible of gentlemen—John Bull. Numerous were the festivities and splendid the fêtes given in honour of the illustrious stranger ; and no party nor assemblage was deemed complete, unless the long beard of the Persian was discerned among the fashionable phalanx. All this was delightful, indeed, and, basking in the sun-shine of favour, poor Hedak seemed to forget that, as the splendour of his costume, and

the naïveté of his replies, ceased to be piquant as their novelty wore off, so would his presence fail in creating that flattering sensation in society which he had almost begun to consider as his right. Meanwhile, a cloud was gathering around the horizon of the stranger, which, when made visible to his eyes, impressed him with considerably more dismay than could have been caused by the secession of all the leaders of unmeaning follies in existence ; and the remembrance of past and anticipations of future dissipations were scared to flight, and demolished with far greater facility than they had been accumulated by the pleasure-loving Persian. In short, a countryman of his own appeared upon the stage, whose sudden apparition filled the bosom of Hedak with countless visions of bowstrings, cimatars, and poison.

The common policy in eastern courts of employing one party to act as spies upon another

was not deviated from in this instance, as regarded the envoy from Persia ; for, hardly had he departed from Ispahan, loaded with presents and manifold marks of his sovereign's favour, than his most deadly enemy was, with all secrecy and haste, despatched to the same destination, with strict injunctions to watch vigilantly, and without his knowledge, each act and movement of his political opponent. So well and faithfully did the Mirza execute the trust, that his presence in England was wholly unknown to Hedak, until a few days prior to our meeting at Wantage. But no sooner was he made acquainted with the dread certainty of the fact, and finding, moreover, that his foe had for months been residing in London unknown, than his own experience in such matters convinced him that his fate was sealed.

What discoveries the Mirza had effected, or what crimes or omissions Hedak had perpe-

trated, I know not: but it was evident that he gave himself up for lost, and for a time considered death as inevitable. A gleam of hope, however, burst upon the darkness that surrounded him, and, for an instant, his prospects assumed a brighter appearance. One of his suite coolly, and in quite a matter of business-like style, recommended that the Mirza be removed, not merely from one habitation to another, but *bona fide* from *off* the earth *in toto*, and deposited *in* it. Nothing could possibly, under existing circumstances, have been more agreeable and satisfactory to his master than this proposition; and, as Persian notions on such a subject differ widely from our less enlightened ones, it was unanimously resolved on, as a measure which, in its results, must prove highly advantageous to Hedak, and consequently productive of benefit to each and all of his followers.

The object of the Mirza's presence and seclusion was too palpably evident to admit a doubt ; and whether he could find just cause of complaint against Hedak to lay before his sovereign on his return was matter of little moment, since it was not to be imagined so long a journey and such trouble would have been entailed on him to no purpose, when a little invention, filling up any cavity in the history, might enable him to frame a beautifully wrought tissue of crimes and embezzlements, such as no Persian could possibly be guilty of—and live. It was matter of the greatest moment, therefore, that such narration should not reach the royal ear, at all events before Hedak had an opportunity afforded of proving his powers of invention in opposition to those of the Mirza.

It was true enough that, had he managed to reach his sovereign's Court prior to the arrival of his enemy, the chances would be greatly in

his favour ; but who would trust to wind and tide, when a small spoonful of arsenic could set the matter to rest, and compose all the agitated breasts of his suite in half an hour ? Besides which, if the Mirza chose to die in England, there would not be any one to tell tales of him in Persia. The reasons thus assigned for his departure for another world were by them considered satisfactory and conclusive ; and the edict went forth for putting him to death.

So great a difference exists in the manners and customs of different nations, that it is not to be wondered at the Persians having overlooked the trivial circumstance of the possibility of conflicting opinions arising on this subject ; but such unhappily was the case, for, by the officious interference of those who should have had nothing whatever to do in the matter—since it could not have interested them in the least, Hedak and the whole of his attendants were

kept in a most painful state of anxiety ; and the Mirza was enabled to continue his observations and his crimes.

Having discovered the residence of their foe, three gentlemen most sumptuously dressed, and armed with written authority, left Hedak Beg's residence and arrived at the Mirza's mansion. Being admitted, that gentleman was with much ceremony and courtesy informed that, having been intrusted with the commands of the King of Persia to visit England, Hedak Beg, considering himself as the representative of Majesty in this kingdom, could not longer wink at the political intrigues which, he affirmed, the Mirza to be carrying on, much to the dishonour of his king, and the ultimate ruin of his country—the deputation had therefore waited upon him for the purpose of ascertaining whether it was his pleasure to be decapitated by a cimitar, strangled with a bowstring, or poisoned with arsenic like

a rat, specimens of all three of which were laid upon the table for his choice and approval; but, prior to selecting the one for his own amusement, the Mirza, unlocking a small cabinet, produced a counter order from his sovereign, by which he was directed to supersede Hedak Beg, should he find cause for doubting his fidelity, and which cause the Mirza now assured the deputation he had ample reasons for entertaining. This was a new view of the case, and the gentlemen with the practical instruments seemed rather at a loss how to proceed, until he of the bowstring, being rather out of practice and unwilling to lose such an opportunity of improving in his profession, candidly allowed the correctness of all that the Mirza had stated. "But," said the learned functionary, "I conclude it is admitted that the document handed by our royal master to Hedak Beg was delivered prior to the one in possession of the Mirza?"

“Certainly,” he replied, “no doubt of it; and consequently mine, being of a later date, supersedes all former orders to the contrary.”

“Not exactly,” answered the other. “It appears to me that his Majesty’s *first* order should be *first* acted upon, and then, if you have any thing further to adduce, of course, we are bound to obey.”

This reasoning did not in the least accord with the wishes and feelings of their host, who, finding his visitors inclined to save him the trouble of deciding on his mode of death, by selecting an implement themselves, begged permission to say his prayers before starting for the palace of all true believers; and, permission having been granted, he went in quest of his carpet, without which no Persian can with decency address himself to Mahomet.

The possession of his prayer-carpet was not the sole object he had in view, for, on gaining

the landing-place on the stairs, he made a bolt highly indecorous for a man of his rank ; and, uttering the most discordant shrieks and yells, started for the hall door ; and, thrusting it open, rushed into the street a good ten paces in advance of his pursuers. The latter, however, were not idle, for, immediately on discovering the intention of the Mirza, each, seizing his peculiar badge of office, made play after the fugitive at their topmost speed, thus affording a novel entertainment to the possessors of the crowded foot-path, which they were not loth in taking advantage of.

First, flying with outstretched arms, as if imploring protection—his long robe fluttering in the breeze—and uttering most horrible sounds, in an unknown tongue, came the Mirza himself, a picture of fear, horror, and absurdity. A few yards in his rear, pursued the operator on the bow-string, who, unable to gain ground on his

victim, continually cast the cord which he held towards the head of the fugitive, something in imitation of the lasso—then came the functionary with the sword, brandishing his weapon in every direction, much to the imminent danger of all his Majesty's liege subjects ; while, last of all, pounding his decoction of poison with a pestle and mortar which he had brought for the purpose, appeared the third of these eastern executioners. Every one of whom, including the pursued, screamed and shouted most dreadfully.

At first, the crowd, taking them for some strange mountebanks anxious to draw the attention of the people, were considerably amused ; but, when the sword-bearer, distancing the pestle and mortar gentleman, and passing him of the lasso, made a cut at the Mirza, thereby dividing his right ear exactly in two, the populace thought fit to interfere ; and, soon afterwards, the whole

party made their appearance in a much frequented building, known by the name of the Marlborough-street Police Office.

An interpreter having been procured, the whole transaction came to light; whereupon Hedak was summoned in person, and, had not the Magistrate received private intimation of the foreigner's utter ignorance of our laws, and of the desirability of his being leniently dealt with, the more so as he was the representative of sovereignty—he stood a good chance, in conjunction with his myrmidons, of figuring in the pages of the Newgate Calendar; but, as the case stood, he received an admonitory lecture, and, having been bound over to keep the peace towards all his Majesty's subjects, but more especially towards the terrified object of his attack, he was released from bondage, and permitted to depart for his home.

Perfectly satisfied with the proof of Hedak

Beg's kindly intentions towards him, the Mirza deemed it advisable to depart ; so, without further intimation of his movements, he wound his way to Portsmouth ; and, before his enemy could weave a second net for his entanglement, he was ploughing the waves towards Persia, and inventing a new tale of crime against Hedak, every leisure moment he could spare from the laborious duties of sea-sickness.

“For my part,” continued the Persian, “I am dead. The Mirza will reach home first. His story will be told before I land, and—” again drawing his finger across his neck—“I am nothing.”

He had just returned from taking leave of some friends who had been extremely kind to him, he informed me, and was then on his way to town, whence he purposed immediately to start for the coast.

I strongly pointed out to him the absurdity of

pursuing his voyage to Persia, confident of the deadly reception which would there await him : but all my arguments were vain.

“What,” he exclaimed, “can I do here? If disgraced at home, shall I not be publicly pointed at and noted as a cast-away and renegade from my country? Moreover, how can I exist, when all my supplies will be stopped? No, I must not sacrifice my honour. I will return to Persia and take my chance? Why should I eat dirt? Farewell—my liver is turned into water, and my beard into ashes. May the tombs of the Mirza’s father and mother be defiled—may his sisters live upon filth—and may he die the death of a dog!” And spitting on the ground, to show his detestation of that particular family, Hedak Beg entered the green travelling chariot and vanished—while I, bidding the post-boy turn his horses’ heads towards Selby, recommenced my solitary journey.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ill-formed, red brick mansion of Sir Frederick Distowe, and the few stunted trees which, being valueless, had been permitted to remain on the grounds, had long since passed from the hands of the Baronet, by virtue of the auctioneer's hammer; and at Selby were those orgies now performed which had brought so unenviable a name on his former residence.

There were few or no gentlemen in the neighbourhood whom he could persuade to associate with him; neither, indeed, was he particularly anxious for their society; for little

gratification would have been experienced on either side, when it was more than probable he would have found it impossible to select any of the immediate residents imbued with tastes and pursuits similar to his own.

It is not, however, to be conjectured that, on that account, the Baronet secluded himself like a hermit, and lived apart from his fellow-men—quite the contrary. The house was invariably crowded—scenes of riot, profusion, and crime, were hourly perpetrated; and the quiet mansion of my father was now as much shunned by all the respectable portion of the community as it was formerly sought and appreciated.

But who were his boon-companions? The lowest of the low—men whose characters had long since ceased to afford notoriety, but from their infamy—and whose hardened consciences had become callous from repeated iniquities,

thus being rendered totally regardless as to what means were employed so that they were enabled to continue that profligate and abandoned style of life to which they had been so long accustomed.

Such were the persons assembled in the dining-room on my arrival; and there was a peculiar expression of triumphant cunning lurking round my step-father's mouth, as he welcomed my unexpected visit, which I was at a loss to comprehend.

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Austin," said my dearly beloved connection, on my arrival being made known to him. "I only regret not having been apprized of the honour, in order to have made your reception more comfortable to yourself—but," he added, with a sardonic grin, "more acceptable to *me* it could not have been."

Of course, I entreated that no ceremony

might be used ; and, on his stating, with many declarations of sorrow, that the house was so full he knew not where to put me, I requested he would set his mind to rest on that score, since it was a matter of perfect indifference to me where I slept—and, moreover, I took care to inform him that my reason for having disturbed him and his companions was solely to wish him adieu prior to starting for my regiment, which, in all probability, would speedily be summoned on foreign service.

Such a party as the one in which I found myself it had never, up to this period, been my lot to encounter, and sincerely do I hope it may never be again.

The dinner had been laid in my poor father's library ; and I was rather puzzled to account for Sir Frederick's assertion of scarcity of room in the house, when I found there were only three persons assembled at the repast, exclusive

of our two selves ; but those three were indeed a host in themselves. What they were, or rather, what they had been, as regarded their professions or callings, it would have been impracticable to discover—so little were they inclined to be communicative ; but though few words passed their lips, much wine did ; and even my friend, the doctor of saint Patrick's night, with his auto-da-fé garment, would have had no cause to complain of their abstemiousness.

As to Sir Frederick, he was far more moderate in his libations than his guests ; but they continued, in the most praiseworthy manner, emptying bottle after bottle, as though their very lives depended on their drinking.

The three worthies, thus engaged, were, in appearance, the very opposite to each other. One, the most hideous of the party—and whom I afterwards discovered to have been an attorney,

and who, in reward for services duly appreciated, had been struck off the rolls—was a short, stout, vulgar-looking, mortal,—his small, grey, eyes deeply resting in their sockets, in the manner so highly estimated by prize-fighters:—his big head, from which hung down two long, thick, ears, was thatched with a dense matting of dirty, red, hair: while his hands, in size, colour, and texture, like elephants' hoofs, were continually thrust out from his body, as if to show his strength, and there, for a few seconds, kept extended, even like unto the sails of a wind-mill on a calm day. This gentleman luxuriated in the name of Lowerd.

The next one of the party was likewise a lawyer, but, unlike his less fortunate companion, he still contrived to retain his name on the books, more through chance than merit, obtaining, thereby, the privilege of lawfully cheating his Majesty's liege subjects to the

uttermost extent of his ability. This respected individual was, in person, the very reverse of his colleague; though, in iniquity, it would have been difficult to decide on which to bestow the palm of rascality.

For mutual advantage, these two reputable members of the profession agreed upon the desirability of acting before the world as though utterly ignorant of each other's existence: but, so extremely useful was the aid of one to the other that, when a complicated piece of villany was about to be committed, they generally sought each other for counsel and support.

The third of the trio was accosted by the others as "Humphreys;" and the black scowl with which he occasionally favoured the party bespoke a ready instrument for carrying into effect the designs of his companions, where the subtlety of cunning could not succeed, without the aid of brute force.

Such were the convivals assembled; but for what purpose, except drinking, I was ignorant; nevertheless, I could not avoid observing occasional glances exchanged between the host and his guests, apparently indicating that, were it not for my presence, so much taciturnity would, in all probability, have been dispensed with.

The clock had just denoted the eleventh hour to have passed, yet nothing weary of their occupation did my companions appear; when a loud noise in the hall betokened the arrival of an addition to our party; and, almost immediately, the door of the library being thrown open, in walked three more personages each as villanous in his countenance as those with whom I had been dining.

"Where's Jackson?" enquired Sir Frederick of one of the last comers.

"He'll be here presently," was the reply—

and, almost at the same moment, to my utter amazement, in walked my acquaintance at Hatchett's, my claret-loving, benevolent friend,—he who evinced such anxiety not to hurt the feelings of his two debtors when leaving the theatre, on the first night of my arrival in town.

Astonished beyond measure at meeting this person where last of all places I should have expected to find him, I was determined to renew our acquaintance, and instantly accosted him as a friend. On hearing my voice he quickly ran his eye round the table until it rested on my person, when he seemed not only surprized, but considerably agitated and annoyed; yet, if such were the feelings of his mind at that moment, their outward and visible form was speedily suppressed; for, eyeing me with a broad stare of astonishment clearly expressive of “whom on earth can you be?” he passed on to a vacant chair, and took no further heed of my presence.

And this, thought I, is the man who, but a few days ago, was so exceedingly anxious for the pleasure of my acquaintance; and this is the person whom my fair unknown has cautioned me to guard against: and forthwith I prepared to follow her advice, and closely mark the proceedings of the changeable Mr. Jackson.

From the conversation which ensued, I gathered that the last party had but just arrived from the performance of some exploit, the nature of which was not disclosed; but, as the night wore on, the reserve of all gradually wore off: and, so far from being looked upon in the light of an intruder, which seemed to have been the case prior to the additional entrée, each individual now appeared anxious to ingratiate himself into my good opinion, by shewing every civility in his power, — among others, the friendly assurance that another bottle would greatly benefit my health was not forgotten.

Making some trifling apology for a short absence, my step-father soon left the apartment, and I observed he was speedily followed by my sworn friend of claret-drinking notoriety, Mr. Humphreys, and the two inestimable lawyers. Their absence, however, was brief; and they returned, at different periods, with as unconcerned a manner as if wholly unconscious—poor innocent souls,—of any, save their individual selves having left the room during the night. Yet I had good reason for conjecturing that the significant glances interchanged among them foretold a more recent combination of their intellects than they appeared willing I should give them credit for.

“The wine ’s with you, Mr. Austin,” simpered forth the expelled limb of the law, stretching out his huge arms to the evident annoyance of his immediate neighbours, “The wine’s with you, sir.”

“Yes, Mr. Austin, the wine’s with you,—pray help yourself, and pass the bottle,” softly echoed his lanky cotemporary in sin.

“Exactly so,” growled the practical member of the firm, his eyes glaring from under his huge shaggy eye-brows like two large green lights, at the end of a dark avenue at Vauxhall, “Pass the wine, please, sir,—bottle stands with you.”

“Surely!” exclaimed the soothing voice of Mr. Jackson, “you’ll not allow the wine to pass, Mr. Austin, without compelling the bottle to pay toll?”

“Of course, not! of course, not!” exclaimed one and all of my inestimable new acquaintances, at the highest note of their differently pitched voices, much resembling the noise occasionally heard at Exeter ’Change, when the whole *feræ naturæ* have simultaneously exerted their delicate lungs—“Fill your glass,—fill.”

Now, all this had very much the appearance of a dead set being contemplated on the part of the combined forces against my single person; and, feeling very loath to oblige them to the full extent of their wishes, I endeavoured to escape the impending danger by compromise.

“In truth, *gentlemen*,” said I, though I do not think one of them at any period of his life could have laid claim to the appellation,—“In truth, gentlemen, for this evening I have drunk as much, or indeed more than I had the least desire to consume, nor should I have remained so long at the table had it not been for the pleasure of enjoying your agreeable society—I have travelled far since morning; and, as I am aware how disagreeable it must be for a convivial party to witness the presence of a person not joining in their festivities, I will, with your permission, rid you of my society, and retire for the night.”

“No—no—no,” cried they all at once; and again the menagerie of wild beasts sent forth horrible and discordant yells. But the practical member of the fraternity, on receiving a sign from the discarded attorney, rose from off his seat, and, in the coolest manner imaginable, turned the lock of the door; and then as unceremoniously turned the key into his pocket.

I have before alluded to this mode of allowing every man to do as he liked; and, as it was no uncommon custom then, I was neither astonished nor offended at the act. Yet there was something so unprepossessing and dissimilar in the appearance and conversation of the persons by whom I was surrounded, to what I had hitherto been acquainted with, that, I confess, I felt any thing but comfortable when the huge bully appropriated the possession of the key to himself. One small circumstance, however, in some degree re-assured me, and that was the

evident ignorance betrayed by my companions touching the different apertures whereby to make my exit from, or entrance into, the room in question; and it appeared to have wholly escaped their recollection that the chances were greatly in favour of my knowledge of the localities of the building being considerably superior to theirs,—and so it was; for, exclusive of the door so safely guarded by the colossal Mr. Humphreys, there was another, opening from a fictitious book-case, which led into what formerly had been used as the dining-room; but whether the communication had been nailed up, or was still open, I was of course ignorant; I inwardly resolved, however, to ascertain the point on the first opportunity; and, if possible, escape from my not very agreeable Bacchanalians.

In order to lull suspicion, I pretended to regard my detention as a joke, and endeavoured to chime in with the humours of the party; but

the task was so extremely distasteful, and so little amusement did I find in listening to the recital of bad and coarse jokes, that, ere long, my absence of mind attracted notice; and I was speedily rallied on my dullness.

“I fear, Mr. Austin,” commenced the gentlemanly Mr. Jackson, “our society meets not the full concurrence of your approval, for, during the last half hour, we have not been favoured with the sound of your voice.”

“The fact is, I am rather tired to-night,” was my reply; “and, consequently, not perhaps, in as good spirits as when last I had the honour of your company.”

“And when might that have been?” enquired the smooth, soft-tongued Mr. Jackson.

“Not long ago, at Hatchett’s, to be sure:” answered I: “surely your memory may so far serve you as to call to mind the evening you accompanied me to the theatre?”

“Me!” he exclaimed, as though struck with the greatest astonishment, “Me ! why, my dear sir, you must suffer under some most unaccountable mistake ; I never entered the house you mention in the whole course of my existence ; and, as for the theatres ! why, sir, I look upon such places as the lowest sinks of iniquity, and the very circumstance of your coupling my name with such frivolous places of amusement must make it fully apparent, to those who know me best, how utterly impossible it is that you can be borne out in your assertion.”

“My good sir,” was my reply, “the sentiment you have just uttered coincides fully with the advice you gave me on the night I alluded to ; and so confident am I of the absolute folly of supposing myself deceived that I could stake any sum on my not being mistaken.”

“I accept the challenge,” cried the thin man of parchment from the end of the table ; “I’ll

bet you a couple of hundreds you *are* deceived."

"Done," I exclaimed, in the full confidence of success, entirely forgetting the warning of my fair unknown—"done—and, what's more, I'll double it with any other gentleman present."

"Accepted," roared out the keeper of the key; "but how to prove it?"

"My dear young friend," chimed in Mr. Jackson, "don't now, I implore you, pray don't be so rash, I assure you, on my honour," here the hypocritical rascal doubled his two, fat, spungy hands over his upper stomach, "I do assure you, Mr. Austin, you're mistaken—don't bet, I beseech you, it's throwing your money away. You're sure to loose; and I am confident," looking round the table with an insinuating smirk on his countenance, "that no gentleman here would allow you to squander your property so needlessly."

But the two gentlemen who were destined to

benefit on the occasion, appeared to view the case in a far different light; and, as I continued obstinate in my assertion, no further opposition was made to the bets standing.

“Pray, sir,” inquired the disgraced lawyer, addressing me, “did the meeting which you say occurred at Hatchett’s take place lately?”

“Certainly,” I replied, naming the very day and hour.

“Then, sir,” answered he, late of the legal profession, “I am of opinion that this gentleman on my right, together with myself, can satisfactorily settle this matter, since, on the night in question, we were at one period in Mr. Jackson’s society, and, if Mr. Austin acknowledges to have been at the same place and at the same time with him, of course Mr. Austin wins. If, on the contrary, I can prove through the instrumentality of two respectable witnesses that our friend was at another place, at such a time, on the night before alluded to, and if the

other gentleman denies any knowledge of having met Mr. Jackson there; then, gentlemen, I should say the latter is the winner. However," continued this degraded remnant of an attorney, "it is but fair that every thing respecting this bet should be conducted on the plainest and fairest principles."

"Oh! certainly, certainly, of course," interrupted the melodious concert of bibeds.

"Well then, gentlemen," he continued, "I propose that Mr. Austin specify on paper the places where he alledges to have been in company with Mr. Jackson on that night, between the hours of eight in the evening and twelve, while I and this gentleman on my right will each set down the spot and time when we saw our friend during the same hours. Should our two statements not tally, the bet is Mr. Austin's, but should they agree and yet be at variance with that gentleman's, I submit the other party

should be considered as winners. And, to prevent the possibility of any apparent connivance between the parties, I prohibit Mr. Jackson from speaking on the subject until the papers are opened."

And a very judicious arrangement on the part of the lawyer this was; for, as Mr. Jackson sat on the opposite side of the table, it would have been rather awkward had he, on being called upon to declare how he was occupied that night, named some different place of temporary sojourn from his confederates; but, on the other hand, the two trusty individuals, being seated next to each other, had the opportunity of copying one from the other, whilst I was setting down the different places we had visited.

Having laid our separate papers on the table, and having again been subjected to Mr. Jackson's hypocritical entreaties that the bet might even in this, the eleventh hour, be considered as off;

and all agreeing to stand by the result of the present mode of proof—the attorney's document first underwent examination, when I beheld written in a fair and legible hand—"between nine and eleven o'clock, No. 3, Parlour, Black Dog, Bedford."

Well, thought I, this is marvellous indeed; for it is not to be conjectured I was as well acquainted with their proceedings as I have allowed my readers to be; and, fully expecting the next paper would allege my benevolent friend to have occupied the Khremlin, at Moscow, or the Seraglio at Constantinople, or for aught I knew, a back seat in the Infernal Regions themselves, I patiently waited the opening of the second paper, which was to decide the fate of my *four hundred pounds*, and that point was soon settled; for, acting on his stated determination to see fair play, the talkative lawyer thrust the opened scrap under my

nose, whereon I found inscribed “ I was with Mr. Jackson, at the Black Dog, Bedford, from seven till ten.

“ All we want now, gentlemen,” again commenced my tormentor, “ is for Mr. Jackson to declare where he was on the night, which has been made the subject of this bet. And accordingly the worthy being alluded to rose with much apparent regret, and, prefacing his speech with a reiteration of all the advice he had previously showered upon me, ended by assuring the company that, reluctant as he was to have his name in any way mixed up with a bet, however fairly conducted, and never was a decision given with less prejudice to either side, he must say, and with grief he acknowledged it, that his honour forbade his stating anything save the simple truth, however detrimental it might be to either party.

“ Bravo, highly honourable—upright fellow—d——d fine fellow !” yelled the usual chorus.

“Such, gentlemen, being my determination, I am compelled to acknowledge that, on the night in question, for three days previous, and the two subsequent ones, *I was never outside the doors of the Black Dog Hotel, at Bedford.*”

I now began seriously to doubt whether I had not lately been visited by ghosts or devils ; or whether the earth was cumbered with duplicates of the human race ; but it was very clearly demonstrated that my two hundred pounds were to change masters in duplicate, for he of the tarnished character, thrusting a sheet of paper before me, requested on the part of his friends to be furnished with a check for the amount : this was soon accomplished, and the two drafts having found their way into the pockets of my upright companions — the claret resumed its tour.

Supper was now announced ; but Sir Frederic had not as yet returned, but no one how-

ever seemed in the slightest degree inconvenienced by his protracted absence, nor was any remark hazarded as to the cause of his detention. My duplicate friend determined to supply the place of my host, and, with numerous civilities, intreated me to consider myself at home, which, knowing the house *was* my own, I thought savoured somewhat of uncalled for officiousness. Every syllable that escaped him, during our conversation, tended more fully to confirm my opinion of the gentleman at Hatchett's, and the invalid at the Black Dog, Bedford, being one and the same person ; and once, on his uttering a monosyllabic expression of surprise, something involuntarily brought to my mind the remembrance of the Carmelite Friar ; and, on my attention being called to the other end of the room, I saw sufficient to justify my suspicions, and confirm my doubts.

More than half stupified with the quantity of

wine he had swallowed, the bully of the party had placed his hat upon his head, and, pulling forth a long clay tobacco pipe, he was in the act of endeavouring to light its contents ; and, a silver mug, containing I suppose some favourite beverage, being grasped by his left hand, completed, with the exception of the shaggy garment, the *tableaux vivantes* I had already twice seen, namely, once at the mysterious orgies in Piccadilly, and again in the house of my confinement.

“What are you staring at, young ’un?” he exclaimed, seeing me regard him most intently. “Have you met me too, at Hatchetts’, my covey? Eh?” and the beast laughed and hiccupped most unmercifully.

“Nonsense! nonsense! Humphreys,” cried Mr. Jackson, who, for some reason, best known to himself, seemed determined to act as mediator and peace-maker during the night, “be quiet, man, be quiet.”

“Why should I be more quiet than others?” replied the drunken monster, “and why should I be insulted, I should like to know, eh! tell me that?” And down came his huge fist on the table, with a noise like a clap of thunder, making all the punch-bowls and glasses dance like so many *figurantes* in the last scene of a pantomime.

“Nobody *has* insulted you,” answered Mr. Jackson, “you must be drunk—what do you complain of?”

“Don’t talk to me,” he replied; “I knows what’s what—that ere chap, with the miffin face, says as how he’s seen me before, and I says he ’arnt, that’s what I calls an insult.”

“Oh!” joined in the lawyer without a character, “that’s bad between gentlemen, very—but Mr. Austin, I doubt not, will make suitable reparation for the unintentional injury you have sustained: my dear sir—I’ll—”

“I’ll have damages,” roared the brute—da-

mages for defamation, as you skulking lawyers call it; by——I'll not be insulted without cause I'm d——d, if I stand it." And, rising to his feet, the moving monument of flesh seized the tankard from which he had been drinking, and with his utmost force hurled it at my head, but with so bad an aim that it passed far above me, but totally destroyed a very valuable painting and correct likeness of my father, which was suspended over the fire-place; and, losing his balance in the exertion, down he sank on the very chair which my readers may recollect as having called to my remembrance many a kind and affectionate endearment from my lost parent.

I could have treated his attack on me, personally, with as much contempt as an accusation so totally void of foundation, and coming from such a source, fully merited; but, when I beheld the likeness of my beloved relative for

ever destroyed ; and, when I saw the disgusting mass of brutality which had occasioned its unjustifiable and wilful annihilation, stretching out his almost insensible carcass in the very chair whence had so often issued many a kind and affectionate sentence addressed to me ; I felt the blood boiling in my veins at the gross insults offered to my father's memory : and, making but one spring towards the object of my implacable hatred, with a supernatural strength which at any other period I should have felt myself incapable of assuming—I seized the half unconscious delinquent by the collar, and in an instant he was rolling on the ground.

But this feat did not ensure my conquest, for, speedily rising from the carpet, the unwieldy mammoth, foaming with rage and drunkenness, would have immediately crushed my slender carcass in his powerful gripe, had he not been restrained by the interference of the peacemaker, and the two disciples of parchment.

“Clear case of assault and battery,” yelled out the latter of the two: “you’re all in the wrong, Mr. Austin, decidedly wrong—any jury would give it against you—advise you not to stand a trial—compromise, my dear sir, compromise.”

“By all means,” echoed Jackson, “hush it up. I dare say, Mr. Humphreys will take *a thousand* and let you off.”

“A thousand!” I replied—“no, not one farthing will I bestow upon that ruffian.”

“Nay! nay!” interfered Jackson, “for heaven’s sake, my young friend, restrain yourself, and on no account give way to such language. My friend Humphreys is as much a gentleman as any of the company present, and consequently entitled to the satisfaction that one gentleman has a right to demand from another; unless, indeed, he prefer bringing an action against you for assault, neither of which,” he

concluded with a sigh, "are agreeable remedies."

"If such is the case," I answered instantly, "and if, as you say, Mr. Humphreys' situation in society entitles him to gentlemanly satisfaction (but which I beg to observe I very much doubt), I shall be ready at any time and at any place, to meet him in the morning."

"Oh!" exclaimed the bully, "you want to skulk do you? You want to be off and cut your stick, do you? without either paying the money or fighting like a man. Once for all, sir, will you pay me a thousand pounds, as part of the remuneration owing by you for your cowardly assault?"

"*Nerer*," I replied, "not one farthing."

"Then will you fight?" was the rejoinder.

"Yes, but not here, at this hour, and in the present state of excitement in which you are from drink and passion: I will not—but tomorrow I am at your service."

“Aha! to-morrow —you skulking coward,” shouted the drunken giant, “you a soldier—you call yourself a soldier, and afraid to fight—I’ll post you in every barrack-yard in the kingdom.”

Human patience could stand his insulting language no longer; so, turning to the peace-maker, I expressed my willingness to gratify the blood-thirsty propensity of my antagonist.

“Gentlemen,” said he of the fat hands, in reply to my communication, “deeply and most sincerely do I regret the serious turn affairs have now assumed; for my part, I call all present to bear testimony to my entire non-approval of the whole business. If you *will* fight, gentlemen,” elevating his eye-brows, and bringing his shoulders in line with his ears—“if, as you say, Mr. Austin, you are resolved to fight—fight I suppose you must; but, remember, I’ve nothing to do with it; let happen what may, I

wash my hands of the entire proceeding. Oh that this pleasant, convivial meeting should have thus terminated ! Alas ! alas !” and, with his eyes turned up to the ceiling, away went my conscientious ally to ram the pistols up to the very muzzle—the one with ball—the other with blank cartridge only !

During the foregoing speech, the countenances of the rest of the party betokened minds at any thing but rest ; and more than once they essayed to enter into conversation with the determined duellist ; but their arguments produced no favourable effect. To no compromise would he listen short of instantly receiving one thousand pounds as a salve for his wounded honour ; and that sum, for many reasons, I was determined not to surrender—the first and foremost of which was the horrible appearance of cowardice which my admission of such extortion could not fail to imply.

One by one, all left the room—the two lawyers lingering by the side of my opponent, with whom they kept up a low-toned, but animated, conversation until the last moment. In fact their voices rose hardly above a whisper; but when the gentleman with fat hands entered the room bringing with him the weapons of death, I distinctly heard the latter of the men of wisdom mutter, “I don’t like it—its not the way—get into trouble—never intended—bad will come of it.”

To which the other replied, “All’s sure;” and the two limbs of Satan departed.

The plot now began to thicken with a vengeance; and, without the exertion of any great stretch of fancy on my part, a vague suspicion began to haunt me that the chances were pretty considerably in favour of my never having an opportunity of making myself personally acquainted with my brother-officers: and indeed,

the scene before me was ill calculated to arouse pleasurable sensations.

It was about five o'clock in the morning. The faint light of day here and there, struggled through the crevices of the closed shutters; while the candles, for the most part flickering in their sockets, cast a sickly green shade on the various mementoes of the past banquet,—vases overturned, broken glasses, and chairs upset, with here and there a half emptied magnum of wine mingled with a heterogeneous mass of the remnants of the overnight's supper—bore ample testimony to the lateness of the hour at which the guests had separated. The fire in the grate had long since been extinguished; and the broken picture in its massive frame, and the disordered array of the furniture strewn over the room,—bespoke the character of its occupants.

I was standing on the very spot where the

coffin of my father rested but a few years before. What my feelings were, at that moment, let those—if any such there be—who have been similarly situated, answer. To aver that no sensation of trepidation crept over me would be to declare myself possessed of less sensibility than has ever fallen to the lot of mortal; but to allege that even for one instant I regretted the determined course I had adopted would be to acknowledge myself more deficient in common animal courage than I have ever known any member of the glorious profession to which I belonged capable of portraying.

Slowly, and with a countenance as pale as death itself, Jackson approached the table by the side of which I was standing, and deliberately placed the two pistols exactly before me, and within reach—the muzzles pointing to my body, about two or three inches apart from each other, and at half cock.

As he laid the weapons on the table, I could not avoid observing the tremulous action of his hand which shook so violently that it required a second attempt on his part ere the pistols were placed to his satisfaction. The expression of his countenance it would be vain for me to attempt describing. His eyes appeared glazed—his hair was disordered,—and, more than once, after anxiously casting his gaze from one to the other of us—he appeared anxious to speak, but the words seemed to stifle in his throat. Was it anxiety for the result of the conflict—or was it fear for himself should the death of either party ensue? The waning flicker of the lights, shedding their dying rays on the actors of the coming tragedy, imparted to his pallid features a colour and expression almost terrific; and his half opened mouth and lustreless stare betrayed how fully awake he was to the horror of the completion of the intended murder.

Meanwhile the features of my antagonist bore their usual stamp of all the passions most execrable in man. Not a muscle betrayed the slightest fear as to what might be the result of our conflict; nor did he express the least anxiety relative to the preliminary arrangements, but, treating the whole business with the most stoical indifference, he might more readily have been taken for a casual spectator than for a principal in this nefarious proceeding.

Feeling convinced' that I was to be sacrificed without a chance being given in my favour, yet not knowing how to avert my fate without acceding to the ruffian's demands, I eagerly enquired of the pacificator why Sir Frederick Distowe had remained absent all night? and requested that he might be summoned, as it was my earnest and most particularly anxious desire to communicate with him prior to the duel taking place. "Mr. Jackson," I continued,—

little caring at that moment what I said, "I desire either that I may be permitted to leave the room in order to speak with Sir Frederick Distowe; or that my step-father may be informed of the position in which I am placed and my desire of seeing him here *instantly*."

"Sir Frederick Distowe," with difficulty articulated Mr. Jackson, "is not here, nor has he returned to Selby since quitting the party last evening after dinner."

"Not one syllable do I believe," I exclaimed with furious energy. "You thrust a quarrel on me through the instrumentality of your bully, to goad me on to fight by daring to asperse my character, you refuse to meet me in the open face of day, well knowing your accursed villainies could never brook the light—but you say, unless I stand up in this room, and at such an hour as this to be butchered in cold blood,—I am a coward. Now, mark you, Jackson! if,

before last evening, I was in any degree ignorant of your true character, no room is now left to doubt it. For reasons of which I am unconscious, you have perpetually watched, tracked, and pursued me until you have succeeded in bringing me to bay. If I escape the ordeal your wickedness has prepared, I will unmask you to the world as the lowest sycophant and villain in existence. If this duel must take place, why do not some of your colleagues, who but a few minutes since sneakingly departed, stay, as Englishmen should do, and see fair play? Why am I to be placed here alone without the aid of a friend, while my opponent is permitted the assistance of the most accomplished rascal in existence? Once for all, I here solemnly declare it to be my fixed conviction that, if I fall, you and you accomplice will unquestionably, and in the fullest sense of the term, be guilty of 'wilful murder.' I have nothing further to add than

that I dare you as men,—and despise you as assassins.”

For an instant the resolution of Jackson seemed shaken, but it was only for a moment ; and, quickly banishing the feeling of remorse, or twinge of conscience that assailed him, he beckoned my antagonist to the other end of the apartment, where, for about half a minute, they remained in close conversation, with their backs towards me.

The pistols, as I before stated, were placed a few inches apart from each other, opposite to me, and within my reach. What motive or suspicion actuated the movement it were impossible to allege ; but, urged by an indescribable impulse, in which, as on many after occasions, I have fancied I could plainly discern the finger of Providence,—I reversed the position of the weapons, leaving that which had been nearest to myself now adjacent to my

adversary, while, of course, that which had been placed farther from my grasp now rested almost under my hand.

“Mr. Austin,” said Jackson, in a trembling and feeble voice, advancing with Humphreys to the spot where I stood,—“it is not my intention to waste either words or time in reply to the groundless invectives with which you have thought fit to assail me ; I have only to state that my friend, according to the laws of duelling, is entitled to the choice of pistols. One is loaded with ball,—the other is not : Mr. Humphreys, *choose*.” Upon which, after receiving on almost imperceptible, approving nod of the head from his second, he laid his hand upon the one nearest to him, remarking, at the same time,—“that to him it was a matter of small moment.”

“The other pistol is yours, sir ;” half-uttered, half whispered Jackson, — “Now, gentlemen, cock.”

Mechanically I did as directed. The muzzles of our weapons nearly touched. I mentally uttered a supplication for mercy to my Creator : the word was given, " Fire,"—and the immortal soul of my opponent stood in the presence of his God,—there to render up an account of his manifold misdeeds—past—and unrepented of.

CHAPTER XII.

SCARCELY conscious of my actions, I rushed to the side door by the book-case, which yielding to my pressure, I rapidly passed through the rooms that intervened between the library and the hall; nor did I pause an instant till I felt the reviving breeze of the fresh morning air pass across my throbbing and fevered temples.

So suddenly awful had been the termination

of the fray that it was sometime before I could distinctly call to mind that the whole of the last night's horrible proceedings had not their sole existence in my deranged imagination. But, as my more tumultuous feelings gradually calmed down, I recollected each past occurrence too vividly to admit a doubt of the dreadful reality.

Once, I thought I caught the sound of voices, as though persons were in close pursuit, and, crouching amid a quantity of fern on the downs, I listened in an agony of suspense,—but all again was still. From my hiding-place, I at length cautiously endeavoured to look around, but no one could be seen, save two or three labourers slowly moving towards their accustomed toils; and how gladly, at that moment, would I have exchanged places with any one of those poor drudgers of the soil, if, by the barter, I could have freed my mind from the

terrible load that seemed to weigh me to the earth!

In vain I laid to my soul the flattering unction of having perpetrated the act as a justifiable measure of self-defence. In vain I counted over the brutal bearing and insulting conduct of my antagonist, and the too palpable plot that was laid for my destruction. Still, towering above all the arguments I could adduce in palliation of my crime, my conscience exclaimed—"The blood of a fellow-creature stains your hands!"

I had no friend to consult—my uncle was far away,—I had not been at Selby since I was a mere child, and could not therefore expect any one to interest himself for a person branded as I was with the death of a human being. There was the old rector, to be sure; but would *he* exert himself in opposition to the wishes or interest of his then patron, Sir Frederick Dis-

towe, who, I had not the slightest doubt, was the prime mover in the whole plot? I could not expect it. The more I pondered over my wretched state, the more miserable I became; and what the result might have been, on my brain, Heaven alone can tell, had not the fatigue I had previously undergone, and the mental agony of the last few hours, so completely shaken my physical frame that, unconsciously, the transactions of the last day and night gradually lost their distinctness, and, yielding to the influence of an overpowering stupor, I fell into a sound and death-like slumber.

“Hallo, my friend!” exclaimed a voice close to my ears, which speedily brought me to a recollection of my miseries, and with them a prospective introduction to Jack Ketch,—
“Hallo, young man! you appear to have gone to roost as quietly here as if there was no such thing as a certain edict, intituled—‘An Act for

the better suppression and punishment of all vagrants, vagabonds, and beggars ;' to one of which class, I may take upon myself to affirm you pertain. I would strongly recommend your attending to my advice ; and, in this instance, I'll give it without charging for it, which, let me tell you, is no customary donation of mine : I'd advise you to tramp, my man—come, cut and be off." And my fresh acquaintance grinned and chuckled at his own facetiousness, while, ever and anon, he amused himself with flanking his gig-whip at the various wild flowers, whose proximity offered opportunity for proving his dexterity in their decapitation.

By this time I was fully awake, and had no difficulty in recognising the person of all others who was most likely to help me in my critical position ; and, strange to say, he was the only individual in the neighbourhood whose existence escaped my memory, when mentally enu-

merating the different beings who might be inclined to support me: and this was no other than the dapper little man of wisdom, whom my readers may remember to have last seen, when searching, with his two familiars, for my father's will.

Although a few years had passed since that period, time seemed to have treated him most leniently; and, in sooth, to judge by the colour, texture, and cut of his various garments, they also appeared uninjured by the great destroyer. He was elevated to a considerable height, on the dexter seat of the identical bright yellow gig which had often-times excited my childish admiration; the old brown horse, and bright brass harness, still continued in the service of their methodical neat little master. His clothes were brushed with a scrupulous nicety, and the very beaver on his hat shone as smooth and unruffled as had been the case with the felt of

his predecessors. Between his knees, reposed, as in the days of yore, the dark purple bag composed of some shining rustling texture, and in whose capacious interior rested the pecuniary fate of mortals "not to be counted."

It was a considerable time before I could make the spruce little lawyer recognise my person: but, when at last he was satisfied as to my identity, he very naturally expressed his astonishment, in no unmeasured strain, at finding me in such a predicament. To gratify his curiosity on that and other points was at this moment impossible; for I felt that every instant I remained in the vicinity of Selby my chances of detection increased in a manifold degree. Accordingly I endeavoured, in few words, to impress him with the conviction that some great and awful calamity was suspended over my head: from which my only chance of escape was by instant departure and concealment.

No sooner was the kind-hearted attorney made acquainted with my wish, than, desisting from all further importunities, and smothering his curiosity as he best might, he entreated me to mount into his vehicle, where, wrapped up in the ample folds of his blue camlet cloak, I might have dared the prying gaze of the Holy Inquisition itself. My little friend whisked his whip around the fat carcass of the old brown quadruped, and at a tolerable pace we bent our way towards his not far distant domicile.

During our drive, I found I was in a great measure beholden to my old preceptor, the Rector, for my good fortune in having been discovered by my friend, who informed me that the reverend divine having, in his zeal for the parish, eaten enormously at a late vestry meeting, had been taken dangerously ill; and, fancying he had devoured his last dinner upon earth,

despatched a messenger to the man of wisdom, in order that he might make arrangements for the disposal of the wherewithal to furnish savoury repasts to his successors : and, the lawyer having been detained at the house of the invalid until it was too late to return home on the previous evening, was driving back thus early in the morning, when, fortunately for me, I was discovered sleeping by the road-side, under circumstances savouring strongly of vagrancy.

In brief time I performed my ablutions : and, having selected such articles from my host's wardrobe as were absolutely indispensable, I was soon seated in his snug little back-parlour, in the enjoyment of a very substantial repast. That over, my friend hesitated not again to require an account of my adventures ; in consequence whereof I gave him a full detail of all that had passed since my arrival at Selby.

At the commencement of my narrative, the little lawyer, with a most significant smile curling round the corner of his lip, slightly inclined his ear to one side, as though fully aware of the swindling propensities of my *dramatis personæ* ; but, as I proceeded to explain the compulsory manner in which I had been dragged into the quarrel, his short legs, unable to reach the ground, sawed backwards and forwards with the velocity of a steam-paddle ; and, when I reached the final catastrophe, my auditor could remain stationary no longer—for, entirely forgetful of his habitual regularity of manner, he sprung from his chair, as suddenly as if he had been seated on a hive of bees, and, thrusting his hands into his breeches' pockets, until he attained their lowest depth, he darted from corner to corner of the room, like a ferocious animal pacing his confined den.

“Good God! sir,” he at length exclaimed, “who could have foreseen such villany? Such foul, atrocious villany! But come, my young friend, let us talk this matter over calmly—already I can partly fathom the motives that influenced these wretches—yet, still, there is much to be unravelled. Of course you can identify them? eh?”

“Yes, I can identify them,” I replied; “but what good ’s that to me, if I’m to be hanged?”

“True! true! I forgot,” replied the lawyer; “not much, certainly, if, as you say, you’re to be hanged—but it isn’t so clear to me yet that such *will be* your termination.”

“I sincerely trust not,” I rejoined, without the slightest appearance of deception; “but if I *am* hanged, Mr. Jephson, what then?”

“True! true! my young friend! If you are hanged, as you say, what then? Why, this much; I’ll never rest till the whole gang be

destroyed, root, branch, and all. Why, sir, your condemnation on false statements made on oath, which doubtless they will have recourse to—will be the finest thing possible in our hands. We'll get a verdict, Mr. Austin, as sure as the assizes—”

“I dare say all you allege, Mr. Jephson, is perfectly correct; but what's the good of your verdict to me, if it can only be obtained *by my being hanged previously?*”

“True! true!” was the answer; “I had forgotten—you're not used to these things, Mr. Austin—your situation must be a novelty. Calm yourself, my dear sir—calm yourself—for really you are much agitated.”

“Agitated!” I exclaimed, “and so would you be, if you expected to be hanged within the week. For Heaven's sake, Mr. Jephson, tell me what to do, or I shall go distracted.” And true enough, I did feel somewhat like it, as a

sort of panoramic view of the Press-room, Sheriffs, Doctor Cotton, the glass of wine, and the Hangman, all appeared before me.

“Do not needlessly alarm yourself, my dear sir ; I trust we will get over this little affair safely ; now listen. For a long time I have been aware of the description of society Sir Frederick Distowe has called around him ; and, from all I have heard, I doubted not in the least their capability of committing any crime short of murder ; but that their evil passions should have borne them on to that extreme of guilt was far beyond my conjectures. But I should be glad if you would describe the parties to me once more.”

Accordingly, I did as requested—and, having concluded, the lawyer found himself completely at fault with respect to Humphreys, whom I had shot ; but Jackson, he informed me, was a person whose character was well known ; and,

in his more prosperous days, an intimacy had subsisted between him and my step-father, which, it appears, was still carried on. In turns he had been black-leg, sharper, pugilist, marker at a billiard-table, and croupier at a hell; till, at length, turned loose upon the world, without a shilling in his pocket, or a single redeeming quality in his character, he became a disappointed and atrocious villain,—ready, at the beck of any one, to execute whatever iniquitous project might be suggested. He had already been concerned in divers cases of mistaking other persons' property for his own, but which he readily accounted for, by pleading guilty to a short memory and very near sight, which was quite sufficient to have quieted any one less scrupulous than the Bow-street officers; but they, with an obstinacy for which they have occasionally been noted, would not feel at all satisfied or convinced on the

subject, and they were, at that time, anxious for a personal interview, in order that he might have an opportunity of making them converts to his reasoning.

“But,” continued Mr. Jephson, “as it is not possible *that* man could have had any personal dislike to yourself, I feel confident that he has acted at the instigation and by the direction of others, for pecuniary, or equally substantial, advantage to himself. The other two persons whom you have described I know well, since, much to their annoyance, I some time back encountered them face to face at Selby, where I had been on business with Lady Distowe; and I much regret acknowledging that one *is*, and both *were*, members of that branch of the profession to which I belong—and,” he continued, raising his great voice and little arm at the same time—“it is by the machinations of such unprincipled ruffians as these that so much

obloquy is cast on a class of men among whom may be numbered many and many, perhaps, far more conscientious and honourable than a moiety of those who so loudly vituperate against the whole fraternity.”

Whether my host included himself in the number who were so calumniated, he did not inform me ; but, resuming his discourse, continued—

“ From what you have just stated, and from all I can infer from my own observation, I have no hesitation in saying that a plot, as murderous and as cold-blooded as ever entered into the imagination of man, has been put in practice against you ; and, should my suspicions be correct as to the author, it will make the case so horrible and unnatural that I dare not give utterance to my surmises, without further and much stronger proof.”

“ But, my dear sir,” I exclaimed, “ what’s

to be done about Humphreys? Surely they'll give instant information—I shall be in the Hue and Cry, tried, and hung, before my innocence can be established; for what will my voice avail against the testimony of the whole party, who will, of course, frame their statement little to my advantage?”

“I don't think you have much to fear on that head,” was the reply. “In the first place, your step-father would be very unwilling that the scene of such an exploit having occurred at his house should be made public, and as for his guests — I doubt if any one of those worthies will show his face in a court of justice, except from the dock. No! no! I am confident nothing will emanate from them; and, in the present stage of the business, I should advise silence on your part. I will ascertain from your banker whether your two drafts have been presented; and, if so, whether the persons

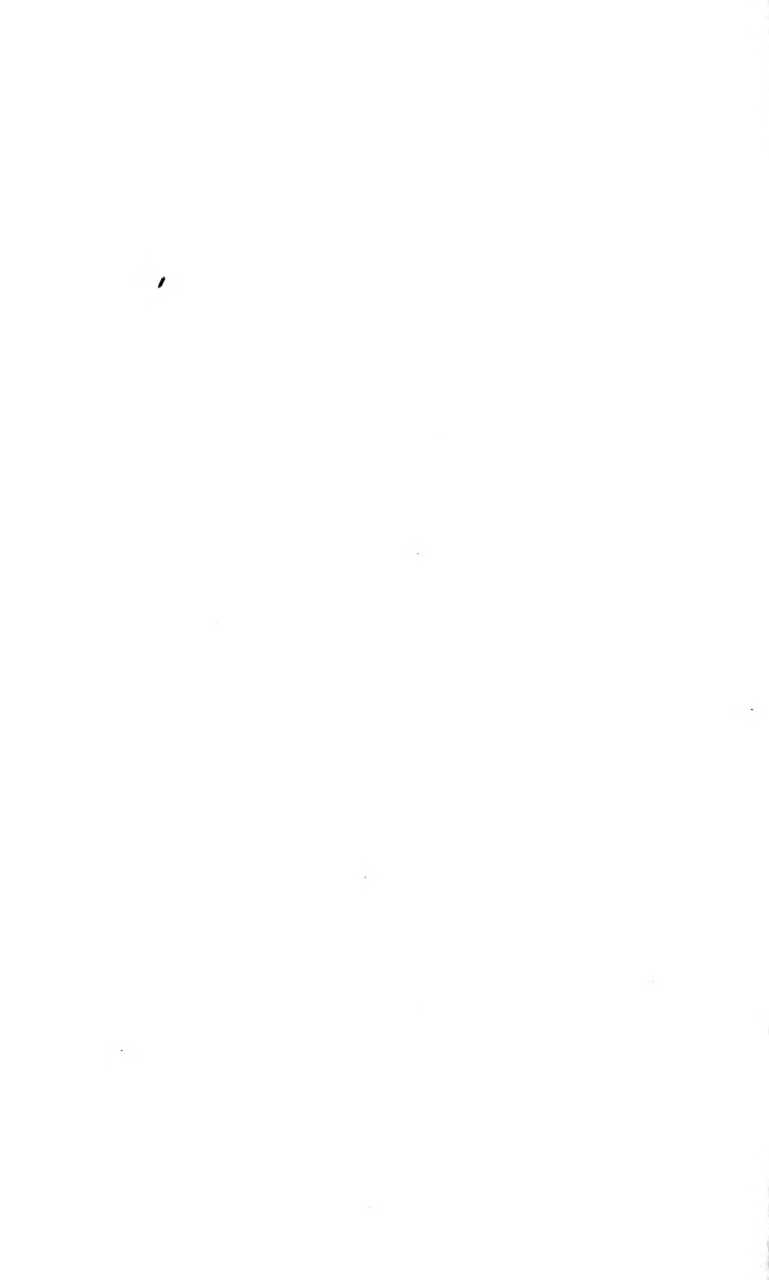
handing them for payment instituted any inquiry regarding yourself. If not, be satisfied no inquiry *will* be made; but, to make all certain, I would recommend your leaving this place as speedily as possible—and, for the sake of your family, as well as for yourself, trust to my exertions in your behalf. Should anything transpire, I will instantly acquaint you; but do not take any rash steps without consulting me.”

I remained with my kind old friend the remainder of that day; and, though he went forth several times, and even ventured to drive past the gates of Selby, not a word farther did he hear of the previous night's adventure; which, while it confirmed him in his formerly expressed opinion, tended, in no slight degree, to remove a very disagreeable load from my mind, and the chance of an equally annoying pressure on my—throat.

When it became quite dark, I entered the carriage prepared for me, and, bidding Mr. Jephson farewell, with many expressions of thanks, and entreaties that I might soon hear from him, I once more started for London, whence I intended instantly to repair to my regiment.

END OF VOL. I.







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